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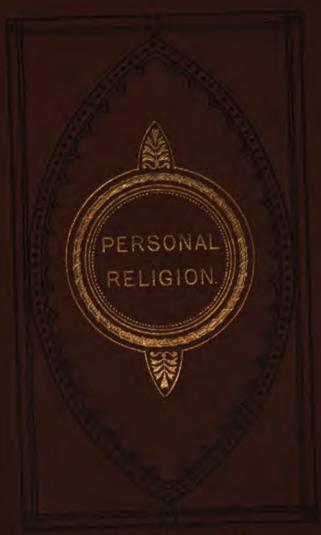
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REV S. JACKSON.



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PERSONAL RELIGION:

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Thoughts on Christian Experience. and Boly Libing.

SELECTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL JACKSON,
WESLEYAN MINISTER.

and affectionately inscribed,
in memory of him,
to the younger Members of the Methodist Societies.

"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving."—Colossians ii. 6, 7.

LEEDS:

H. W. WALKER, BOOKSELLER, 87, BRIGGATE.
1872.

PREFACE.

The late Rev. Samuel Jackson entered the Wesleyan ministry in 1806, and spent forty-nine years in its active duties, and six in the retirement of a supernumerary. He died at Newcastle-on-Tyne, August 4th, 1861. During the last twenty years of his life the subject uppermost in his thoughts was the vast importance of early conversion to God. It became his settled conviction that "this world will never be right until it is understood, not merely that evangelical religion concerns the young, but that it concerns them above all people." In unwearied efforts to produce and strengthen this conviction in the minds of others, his last days were spent.

He left many MSS. in which he had given utterance to the deep yearnings of his heart on this great question. Most of these have been published, as opportunity offered, under an overpowering sense of duty, and without any attempt at pecuniary advantage. Several sermons on general subjects have also been committed to the press, in connexion with a short memoir from the pen of his elder brother, the Rev. Thomas Jackson. The MSS. notes of others, preached in his various circuits, abound with passages.

worthy of preservation. It has been thought that a selection of these, bearing especially on Christian experience and holy living, might be useful to younger members of the Society, and would be kindly received by them for his sake. Such a selection is contained in the following pages.

The sermons from which these extracts have been taken were listened to with pleasure and profit by Methodists of a generation now fast passing away; and it is earnestly hoped that this little volume will find many thoughtful readers among those who inherit their name, and who are rising up to fill their place, and carry on their work.

April 23rd, 1872.

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PART FIRST.

T.

Early Methodist Experience.

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law."—Rom. iii. 28.

What is the doctrine contained in these words? is the great Apostolic, the great Protestant doctrine of the justification of a sinner before God by faith in the meritorious death of Christ, and by faith in that death And what is Methodism? It is this great doctrine embodied in the blessed experience of a multitude of human beings, and carried out into its practical results in their life and conversation. The first Methodists did not invent this doctrine: they found it in the New Testament. Nor is it pretended that they were the first to do this. It was understood and referred to by the ancient Fathers of the church: it is brought out and made especially prominent in the writings of Luther and the Protestant Reformers: and Mr. Wesley's attention was first directed to it by his conversations with the Moravian brethren.

What the early Methodists did, in reference to this great doctrine, was, to assign it the very first place as a matter of personal possession and experience. They saw that it was not merely a statement to be believed, but a blessing to be obtained and enjoyed. They were not satisfied with merely regarding it as an article of revealed truth, nor with merely stating and defending it as such, through the medium of the pulpit or the press. In their judgment, if it was anything at all, it.

deed

was something of the first and last importance to such a creature as man, and therefore to be preferred and sought before all other things. Accordingly, we find them acting upon this principle. Comparatively speaking, they neglected riches, and honour, and pleasure, and learning, and every thing that the world deems great and good, that they might be "justified by faith." There was a sense in which they neglected other duties that they might attend to this. Until this was done, nothing could be done as it ought. For this they wept, and prayed, and believed, and wrestled, until they finally prevailed.

Had our fathers gone to the world for advice, they would have been told to ask, What shall we eat? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? How shall we gain riches and honour? and to laugh at justification by faith, as a shadow and a dream. Had they consulted their own reason, they would have been taught to prefer many things to this. Instead of attending to it first, they would have put it off to the last; and perhaps never have attended to it at all. Happily for themselves, and happily for us, they consulted nothing but the Bible; and there they were taught that men are to seek "first"—before all other things—"the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." On this

The conduct of our Methodist fathers was, in principle, like that of the widow of Sarepta, and was followed by similar, but still more glorious results. The prophet Elijah directed her, first of all, to prepare a cake for himself; while she and her son must be content to have their wants afterward supplied. Had she consulted her own feelings, or the opinions of her neighbours, she would have been taught to reverse this order of proceeding. But she attended only to the commandment of God, by the mouth of His prophet, and proved that in keeping of it there was "great"

advice they acted; and they were blessed in their

reward." The first Methodists neither listened to the maxims of the world, nor to the suggestions of their own reason, but simply and steadily hearkened to the commandments of God. They made up their minds never to rest until they felt that they had "peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And they were blessed in their deed: they obtained the desire of their hearts. No sooner was the fire kindled than it began to spread. Had there been no blessing from God, there would have been no Methodism: our founders would have been forgotten; and we should never have existed as a religious community. But the work then begun is still going on, and is the result of that blessing with which God was pleased to crown the tears and prayers of our fathers, in their attempts to realize, in their own experience, the doctrine of justification by faith.

Such a practical preference of this great doctrine has led to the prominence given in Methodism to the witness of the Spirit, and to entire sanctification. Those who cannot and will not rest until they have obtained pardon, by trust in the death of Christ, are sure to receive "the promise of the Spirit through faith." All the heaven which is experienced by a newly pardoned sinner is the work of the Spirit; and he is constrained to say, "This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes." We are sure to hear much of the work and witness of the Spirit among a people who are, above all things, anxious to realize, in their own experience, what it is to be "justified by faith."

This also led the early Methodists to insist so strongly on the privilege and blessedness of being saved from all sin in this life. When a man is pardoned, and admitted to intimacy and friendship with God, he cannot continue in any known sin. Sinful thoughts, as well as sinful words,—sinful principles, as well as sinful acts,—when viewed in the light of God, are unutterably detestable, and cannot be long endured.

These were the feelings of our fathers; and when they found it written in the Bible, "I will circumcise thine heart, that thou mayest love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." they began to encourage one another to wait for and expect the fulfilment of this promise in themselves. We shall continue to preach the doctrine of Christian perfection as long as we continue to

know what it is to be "justified by faith."

On the same general principle we account for the union and subordination which exist in the Methodist Societies. A large body of our people have been deeply convinced of their sin and danger; they have fled to Christ, and found redemption in His blood. Hence they feel they owe a debt to Him which they never can discharge. They have become His covenant servants: and their language is. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" With this devotion to Christ is connected a burning desire that others may enjoy In their judgment, it is the one the same blessedness. thing needful for fallen man; and were it but generally known and enjoyed, it would turn the world upside down. Now, there is a church order which is an ordinance of Christ. He has commanded His people to submit themselves "one to another," and to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He has plainly intimated that it is only by being united among themselves that they can become His instruments in converting the world. Although the Methodists are often tried one with another, yet the love of Christ and of souls still prevails, and they continue a united body. If ever our attention is diverted from the all-important doctrine of justification by faith,—if ever we come to be chiefly occupied about lesser points, -we shall be divided into factions, and rent into a thousand pieces. But so long as we regard this great blessing as it was regarded by our fathers, and are supremely anxious to enjoy it ourselves, and to impart it to others, so long we shall possess the true living principle of Christian concord and agreement. Although there may be little differences and disputes about minor matters, yet we shall be, mainly and substantially, of one heart, and of one mind; and evince the unity and efficiency of a combined army, in carry-

ing the Gospel through the world.

Methodism, by God's mercy, has been rich in religious biography. Many are the holy lives and happy deaths which its annals contain. The death-bed of our venerable Founder was a scene of peace and of triumph over the last enemy; and hundreds and thousands of his followers, in the same solemn hour, have tasted of the same joys, and been favoured with the same prospects. If we attempt to trace all these joys to their source, we shall find that the spring and fountain from which they all proceed is the great doctrine of justification by faith. There was a time in the history and experience of these persons when they were engrossed with the business of their justification, when they neglected all other things for this, when their language was,

"Nothing I ask or want beside,
Of all in earth or heaven,
But let me feel Thy blood applied,
And live and die forgiven."

According to their faith it was done unto them. The sentence of absolution and remission was pronounced; and they felt that they were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. The happiness of all the Methodists now in heaven began when

"Justified through faith alone, Here they knew their sins forgiven."

If we wish our end to be peaceful and happy, we must walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. A happy death can only be produced by this cause. We must be "justified by faith," before we can "rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

II.

Banger of Wilful Sin.

" The wind hath bound her up in her wings."-Hosea iv. 19.

WHEN men throw off the Divine guidance and authority, they are immediately brought under the influence of a power which hurries them on to destruction. It may be said of all such persons, "The wind hath bound" them "up in her wings." A prodigious power, called into action by their own misconduct, is bearing them forward, as on the wings of

the wind, in a course of sin and ruin.

Every time we wilfully sin we fall more fully under the power of our hereditary depravity. How great that is, we may learn, in part, from the seventh chapter of Romans, where the apostle describes the obstinate and successful struggles it maintains with the convinced and returning sinner. He tells us that this enemy never slumbered, never was absent; it was never to be taken by surprise; it was ever wakeful, ever at its post :-- "When I would do good, evil is present with me." He also observes that it was a determined, and therefore a successful enemy; like a fierce warrior, it fought desperately, and therefore prevailed :- "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." He tells us that it is so overpowering, that the sinner is so completely subdued by it, that he had no hope of deliverance, but by some special and miraculous interference of God:-"Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

We are all, by nature, under the power of this principle; but every act of wilful sin brings us under its power more fully; so that the willing transgressor is the most completely controlled by it, although he is the least conscious of its strength and of his own danger. None is so completely carried away by the stream as he who sleeps in his bark, and smoothly goes along with the current; only he who opposes it is conscious of its force. Those persons are most fully under the power of the giant sin, who march with him, hand in hand, chatting and laughing, while he conducts them to his den. Those only who have attempted to return, who have had a struggle with the monster, properly know the strength of his arm, and how difficult it is for his victims to effect their escape.

When we wilfully sin, we gradually fall under the power of evil habit; a power which it is difficult to define, but which is everywhere to be seen in its operation and effects. When we do a thing once, this becomes an inducement to do it again. That inducement accumulates and strengthens, by every successive act, until we are overpowered and captivated by it. Habit is a silken chain, which is not felt; nor can it well be broken: it gives us no uneasiness; but it takes away our liberty. An evil habit may adorn our persons like a robe; but it encloses us like a net. It may be beautiful to the eye, and pleasant to the touch; but it is fetters to our feet, chains upon our hands, and a cart-rope about our neck, by which the devil is leading us to the chambers of death.

When we consent to sin we are brought under the influence of that power which arises out of the connexion between circumstances and events. For one action leads to another, so that if you pull one link of the chain you draw another after it. When Joseph's brethren had begun to hate him, they were led to think of getting rid of him; and when in this state of mind the Midianitish merchants passed by, they were powerfully induced to sell him; and then, having proceeded so far, it became necessary for them to

finish what they had begun, and tell a lie, to impose upon their aged father. As he who casts a seed into the earth thereby awakens a principle, and puts a power into motion, which will certainly produce the blade, the stalk, the leaves, the flowers, and the fruit; so he who commits one wilful sin thereby sows a seed which will shoot out its stalk in another transgression, will put forth its leaves in another, its blossoms in another, and finally (unless God interferes) bring forth the fruit of eternal death.

Sinners dream of future repentance, and talk of being converted at some stated period of time; and know not that "the wind hath bound" them "up in her wings," and that their conversion can only take place by stopping the whirlwind in its course, which is a miracle possible to none but God.

III.

No Peace to the Wicked.

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest..... There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.

BECAUSE the sinner finds himself in the presence of One who is intimately acquainted with the particulars of his conduct. The facts of his transgressions are known to himself, and they are also known to the God with whom he has to do; and therefore he is a miserable man. After the brethren of Joseph had sold him for a slave, it was impossible for them ever to forget that transaction. It is true they contrived, by means of a plausible falsehood, to conceal it from their aged father; but both these circumstances equally tended to destroy their own peace of mind. The caution and reserve which they were obliged to observe towards their father, lest some word, or look, or act should

escape them, which might disclose the truth as to the fate of their brother, must have destroyed all that free and friendly and confiding intercourse between members of the same family which is so important an ingredient in the cup of human happiness, and have rendered their condition, even at home, exceedingly irksome. The circumstance of their being obliged to keep the sale of their brother a secret, rendered it impossible for them ever to forget it; and at the same time they could never think of it without self-reproach and remorse. They had kindled a fire in their own bosoms, which they could not cast out, for fear it should be seen by other people; and they could not keep it in without being scorched and tormented by its flame.

Yet, painful as was their condition during their residence with their father, it became abundantly more so after they had gone down into Egypt, and found themselves in the presence of Joseph himself. When he had thrown off the guise under which he had been concealed, assured them he was their brother, and made some inquiries after their father, we are told that they could not answer his questions, they were so "troubled at his presence." Then, their conduct was known, not only to themselves, but also to the man before them, and was likely in a little time to come out, and be known to all the world; and they were dumb with confusion and shame. How then can a sinner be happy in the presence of his God? child happy when his father has detected him in some act of falsehood and disobedience? All the meanness and falsehood of the sinner are naked and bare in the sight of the God with whom he has to do. What then is the misery he endures when he finds himself exposed to the flashes of those eyes of flame, from which there is no possibility of escape.

A sinner cannot be happy, because of the position in which he has placed himself. His conduct is so mischievous as to render his destruction a matter of

absolute necessity. Like the conduct of Absalom, it is at once disobedience to his father, and treason against his sovereign. That young man embarked in the criminal enterprize of dethroning his own father. in order to make himself king. By great patience. and the long practice of various plausible and popular acts, he at length succeeded in stealing the hearts of the men of Israel. The conspiracy was strong; his adherents were powerful, both by their talents and numbers; the kingdom was in commotion from one end to the other; and the wish of his heart was on the point of being fulfilled. Now, although David, as a father, could never bring himself to consent to the death of his son, yet these movements had rendered that death a matter of public and imperative necessity. When David dismissed his army to the field of battle, for the purpose of deciding the point in dispute by the sword, viewing the state of things with the eye of a father, he solemnly charged his troops and officers. saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." But Joab, his principal general, looking at things with the eye of a statesman, saw that the life of Absalom had now become a public calamity, and that the good of the nation required that he should be sent out of the world as soon as possible. Accordingly, at the very first opportunity, when he heard that the young man was entangled in the boughs of a tree, he hastened to the spot, and took away his life.

The conduct of every sinner is equally outrageous, and places him in a precisely similar position. He is at once a rebel against his Father, and against his Sovereign. By resisting the authority of God he disturbs the repose of the world. His Maker may pity him, his Saviour may plead for him, good men may be sorry for him; but so long as he is actuated by the principle of sin, and continues in the practice of sin, so long he is doomed to die. His death is neces-

sary for the quiet and well-being of the universe; and is sure, sooner or later, to take place. How then can a man be happy, when he has placed himself in such a position as this? Was Absalom happy, even at the fullest tide of his success? He had raised a tempest in the country, and it was swelling and tossing like the sea in a storm; and all this was but an image of the agitation which had been created in his own soul. While his criminal conduct was producing so much tumult without, there could not possibly be any peace within. Every sinner is an enemy to God, an enemy to his species, and an enemy to himself; and he must either alter his conduct, or be finally cut off, and removed, as a public nuisance. How then can he be

Many ways and means have been invented by men for alleviating (as they suppose) the misery they have brought upon themselves by sin. Some recommend ' an earnest application to business, and to fill the mind with the facts and principles of literature, or science, or law, or politics, or merchandise, or husbandry, by way of giving it occupation. Others prescribe a course of pleasure, and advise us to addict ourselves to These things may divert the various amusements. mind, and enable us for a while to forget our misery; but they have no tendency at all to remove its cause; and therefore, however long this chase may be continued, whenever it comes to an end—and come to an end it must—the mind must fall back upon itself, and be as wretched as before. Forgetting God, and the faults we have committed against Him, will never bring back our peace of mind. Peace was lost when sin was committed; and it will never be recovered, but by such a repentance as is followed by forgiveness and reconciliation.

IV.

Obedience and Blessing.

"O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea."—Isaiah xlviii. 18.

WE all know that there is a moral difference between one action and another. To speak the truth is right: to utter falsehood is altogether wrong. An action which is right in itself may become totally wrong by the motive from whence it springs, and by which it was suggested. It was, for instance, right to give alms to the poor, but entirely wrong, before doing so, to sound a trumpet, in order to attract attention and be "seen of men." These moral distinctions are matter of consciousness. Every one knows that there is a difference between right and wrong; for his own conscience approves of the one, but condemns the other. These facts assume the existence and the moral government of God. It is impossible to give any rational account of these feelings without taking for granted that there is a God, and that He is "the Judge of all the earth."

Human beings, in consequence of the transgression of Adam, either altogether forget God, or think but lightly of His moral government. Hence they are said to be "born in sin;" and so long as they continue in the same moral state, it is said in the Bible, "there is no fear of God before their eyes." As they are surrounded by numerous and powerful temptations to wrong-doing, they are easily prevailed upon to break the laws of their Maker, and conclude it will be better for themselves, to violate His commands. Still, this does not in any degree change the condition of man. Conscience attests the truth. Man is under moral government. "There is a God that judgeth in the earth:"

He "is angry with the wicked every day;" and His displeasure, like a fire, when once kindled, will burn "to the lowest hell." His power extends to all duration, as well as to all creatures, and is felt both in this world and the next; so that all transgressors are sure to be sufferers, either here or hereafter. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Sometimes men are banded together in such prodigious numbers as to prove too strong for the civil government under which they live. Magistrates are obliged to connive at their doings, and to tolerate their wickedness, because they are unable to put it down. But no such case can happen under the perfect rule of God. Though men and devils combine in one mighty league and phalanx to resist the Divine authority, to the last; yet all and each will be treated as if he were but a child, or a simple and unprotected individual.

As long as we cherish the spirit of resistance to the motions of Divine grace, and of adherence to those of hereditary depravity, we are in danger of eternal perdition. Hence we account for the fear and distress so commonly experienced by those who enter upon a religious course. They feel they are exposed to a fearful danger. This danger is increased by a continuance in sin. The sooner we freely submit to the moral government of God, and become "willing and obedient" to Him, the less reason we shall have for sorrow and alarm, and the more speedily we shall realize security and happiness.

Yet we are not to imagine we have never, in any degree, submitted to God, until we have shared in that fulness of happiness here described. All the heights and depths of Christian holiness may be attained; but we must first submit to enter the strait gate, to walk in the narrow way, and to climb the hill of the Lord. We may know our sins forgiven, receive the witness of the Spirit, be sanctified wholly, and love the Lord our God with all our heart, provided we begin by saying.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and are content to fear God, and work righteousness. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." There is first the dawn, then the rising of the sun, then the increasing light of the morning, and finally the glory and splendour of noon. Although you are not at present trees, "the planting of the Lord's right hand," and your religion may rather resemble "a grain of mustard seed;" yet, if you will but plant and water it, such will be its growth that it will become covered with "all the fruits of righteousness."

If you do but sincerely and honestly consent to the moral government of God, and begin truly to keep His commandments, this principle is sure to grow into a holy life and a happy eternity. As our faith and obedience strengthen, so will the blessedness with which it is inseparably connected. True religion is essentially a covenant between God and man; and when we obey His word, He is sure to bless us "with all spiritual blessings" in Christ Jesus.

Obedience to the commandments of God does not bring any exemption from the trials and sorrows incident to human life; but "we know that all thing work together for good to them that love God." Whe we have embarked with Christ, we are bound for the shores of eternal blessedness; and the waves ar storms of life do but hurry us forward to the have where we would be. None but the traveller to Pardise can say,

"The fiercer the blast, the sooner 'tis past;
The troubles that come,
Shall come to our rescue, and hasten us home."

V.

"Your Reasonable Service."

"I BESEECH you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,"—by the incarnation and death of Christ, by the office and influences of the Holy Ghost, by the blessings of the Christian salvation, by the hopes of a better life, and by all the infinite grace of the Gospel,—"that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." Let your persons, by an act of your own will, be dedicated to God, to be always employed in His service, and put to any work He may have for you to do. This, the apostle adds, is "your reasonable service." A holy life is in accordance with the nature and truth of things, true practical philosophy, the dictate of

justice, wisdom, and propriety.

A reasonable principle lies at its foundation: faith in the existence and attributes of the Divine Being. When you see a large and stately building, at once strong and beautiful, ornamental and useful, you conclude that it must have had an architect, and regard it as the undoubted production of some intelligent mind. You take up an interesting book, and are pleased with the excellence of the sentiments, and the beauty of the language; and are naturally led to inquire about its author. It never enters your mind to suppose that it has been written without design, that it is merely the work of chance. Such an opinion you would regard as stupid and absurd. This great universe is a vast volume, full of wisdom and instruction; and it must have had an Author. It is a mighty fabric; and its Builder must be such a Being as we conceive God to be. He must, for instance, be eternal; for if there ever had been a period when nothing existed, there had been nothing still. Something must have existed from all eternity. That eternal Being must be intelligent, and powerful, and good; for all these attributes are impressed upon His works, and are there at this day. written in flaming characters, known and read of all That Being, too, appears to be but One: for the All its parts, however numerous and universe is one. diversified, constitute one vast but perfectly harmonious and united system of things. This conclusion is abundantly confirmed by the fact of a Divine revelation having been given to mankind. God, who made the world, spake unto the Jewish fathers by the prophets, and to us, in these last days, by Christ and His All these ambassadors have been duly accredited by "signs and wonders, and divers miracles. and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Persons who dislike religion, and are unwilling to submit to the restraints and duties of a holy life, may reject all this evidence, and call their opinions reason and philosophy; yet atheism, both speculative and practical, is an irrational thing. The Bible is a message from God; this magnificent universe bears testimony to His eternal power and Godhead. To believe in His existence and attributes, and to frame our lives on that belief, is a "reasonable service."

It is also a "reasonable" thing for the mind of man to return to the source from whence it came, and to go forth in search of that for which it was so evidently Our bodies must ultimately mingle again with that earth of which they were originally formed; and it is true philosophy, and the highest reason, when our souls have learned to know their great and adorable Author, and flow back again to the fountain from whence they proceeded. It is also a rational act to bring together things which were evidently made for each other. It is plain that the eye was made for the light, and the light for the eye; and he would be altogether a foolish man who should resolve to keep his eyes perpetually closed, or to spend his life in darkness, and never come abroad to see the sun and enjoy the day. The human soul was formed for its

Creator. Our light and glory and blessedness are all the result of communion with Him; and separate from Him, we are poor and miserable and destitute and wretched. Never does the mind of man act a more reasonable part than when she opens her eye to admit the light of God, and spreads her leaves, like a flower, to receive the influences of His grace; and is thereby made to live and bloom in immortal beauty and blessedness.

Just as the planets revolve round the sun, as their common centre, so the soul of man was made to be enlightened with the glory of God, to feel His attractions, and to move and shine to His praise. human apostacy was a dreadful moral convulsion, by which this intelligent planet was heaved from its orbit. and flew off into immeasurable space; and had it been left to itself, it must have gone further and still further from God, until the wandering star was lost in "the blackness of darkness for ever." Our redemption by Christ, with all its wonderful provisions, was a great effort on the part of God to bring the wanderer back to Himself. By the dying love of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost, He seeks to draw us again to our true and proper centre,—to refix us in our former orbit, that we may be united to Him by love. filled with His light and blessedness, and shine to His honour and praise, as the stars in the firmament, for ever and ever. To resist this gracious attempt, to resolve to go still further from God, and separate ourselves from Him, utterly and for ever, is an act of folly and insanity. But to return to God through Christ, to yield to the drawings of His Spirit, and to consent to be eternally happy in a state of endless communion with Him, is a wise course of conduct, and a perfectly "reasonable service."

VI.

On Receiving Christ.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."—John i. 12.

MEN seldom receive a thing unless they conceive it to be necessary. Such things are, indeed, often forced upon them: but that is the deed of another, and not an act of their own. Jesus Christ does not impose Himself upon us on such a principle as this. His people are a willing people; and their acceptance of Him is their own act and deed. But on this subject, as well as on every other, human nature is true to its own principles; and men never accept Christ until they feel their need of His help. People do not receive a physician, as such, except when they feel themselves to be sick. He may be a first-rate man in his profession, educated at the most famous universities, distinguished from all his contemporaries by his superior attainments; his practice may be unparalleled, both in extent and success; still, people will say, "If I receive the doctor, I must pay his fees, and take his medicines; and as I am in perfect health, I will do neither the one nor the other." Nay, should that physician offer to prescribe without fees, and to give his medicines for nothing, as his services were not needed, they would, most likely, be respectfully declined.

It is just on the same principle that men act in reference to Jesus Christ. His name is called Jesus, because His office is to "save His people from their sins." He also delivers them from "the wrath to come." Those who feel they are sinners, and liable to the wrath to come, of course, feel they need a Saviour, and will therefore probably receive Him, when He is offered to them. But those who think that, upon the

whole, their character is as good, and their condition as safe as it well can be, will feel no need of Him, and will therefore never think of receiving Him. He may be a very wise and extraordinary man; He may be "over all, God blessed for ever;" He may be "able to save to the uttermost;" He may "stand at the door, and knock," and offer to save them "without money, and without price;" still, they know that if they receive Him as a Saviour, they must submit to His authority, must put themselves into His hands, must part with many things which they call profits and pleasures, must deny themselves, and take up their cross daily; and as they imagine they have no need of His help, they meet His offer by saying, "I pray Thee have me excused."

Yet every human being, by nature, is in the utmost danger. Did not the Redeemer die? and did He not die as our Substitute and Surety? When a man pavs a debt in behalf of another, he thereby declares that the sum demanded and paid was justly due, and that his friend who had contracted the debt must have paid it in person, had not his surety paid it for him. When our Saviour consented to suffer the penalty of the broken law, He thereby confessed the justice of its sentence, and acknowledged that we deserved to die, and that we must have died, in person, had not He died in our room and stead. Let no man deceive himself. Without an act of penitential faith on our part. we cannot be saved by the death of Christ. It was not the Divine intention, in that mysterious transaction, that we should immediately be discharged from our liability to eternal death, without taking any farther trouble or concern, but "that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish." Those who have come to years of discretion, and who hear the Gospel in its purity, must make a believing application to Christ, or they have no part in Him, and are still liable to the curse of a violated law.

When Christ is truly received at all, it is with an ardent and supreme affection. The most valuable things in the world, in the eves of a perishing sinner, appear of little value in comparison with Him. When our Lord says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple," He only describes the feelings of all penitent believers, and the light in which He is regarded by them. What can father, or mother, or wife, or child, or brother, or sister, do for a man who feels that he is "condemned already," and that "the wrath of God abideth upon him?" Many are the comforts and benefits he has received at their hands. in a thousand different ways. Their affection for him cannot be doubted. But now he is struggling and sinking in a sea of distress, and their arms cannot reach him. They may pity and weep; but they cannot help. His own life is indeed valuable; but in this case it can bring him no relief. It may be spent in acts of piety to God, and charity to man. It may be laid down, in the true spirit of martyrdom, in the cause of religion and truth. But, after all, without Christ, he must die, and go down to perdition.

"These for sin cannot atone, Christ must save, and Christ alone."

Is it any wonder that a man should feel a supreme regard for the Saviour who has helped him in such a terrible extremity as this? If it is natural to attach the greatest value to that from which we derive the greatest benefit, then he must think little of all earthly things, in comparison with his Saviour; and be ready, if called upon, to forsake them all, from a principle of love and gratitude to Him.

Those who accept Christ are accepted by Him in return. This changes their entire character and condition, delivers them from condemnation, and admits them at once to all the delights and privileges which belong to "the household of faith, and the family of God." And the change in their inward views and feelings corresponds with this change in their outward condition. Is not the heir-apparent to a throne made acquainted with his true position and prospects? The very servants in the nursery will not fail to tell him; and as he advances in life, the same thing will be pressed upon his attention in various ways. When placed under tutors, he will be reminded of the necessity of cultivating those habits, and acquiring those accomplishments, which are likely to enable him to fill and adorn his elevated situation. Are the children of God, then, to remain ignorant of the privileges to which they have been admitted, and of the crown and the kingdom which await them? They are directed to "walk worthy" of the vocation wherewith they are called; but can they be reasonably expected to do this, if they know not that they have ever been called at all? St. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice;" but how can they rejoice, if they are to be kept in ignorance of the great things God has done for them?

Yet scoffers and triflers sometimes ask how we can possibly know any thing on such a subject as this. "Have you," say they, "received your information by an audible voice from heaven? or is it written in the Bible that you are the children of God?" Persons who ask such questions as these forget that there is a Holy Ghost. They may be very clever; but they do not even profess to understand all the laws and mysteries of the spiritual and invisible world. Mind can communicate with mind; and the Creator can explain Himself to His creatures. An inspired apostle affirms it as a fact, (whether these people can understand it or not,) that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us," and that "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit these.

we are the children of God." Christ proposes to settle this question in your minds in the way of *personal* experience.

VII.

"Our Justification."

Rom. iv. 25.

This is only one among several names employed by the sacred writers to describe the same evangelical blessing. In some cases it is called pardon, or forgive-Here the blessed God is contemplated as an absolute sovereign, performing an act of authority. To pardon is the prerogative of royalty. It is the act of a king, who is placed above law, and has power to arrest its course, and to set aside its decisions. In this case, the death of Christ intervenes, in order to prevent the ill consequences which might otherwise arise from this exercise of the Divine prerogative. The fact of one sinner being forgiven might have encouraged others But when it is seen that Christ has become the substitute of sinners, and in that character has been solemnly devoted to death by the appointment of the Father, it is seen that God is resolved to uphold the authority of His law, even at the very time when He remits its penalty. Though He shows His mercy. He gives such a display of His power and wrath as is sufficient to deter His creatures from taking liberties with His commands in time to come. He exercises His prerogative of mercy without, in the slightest degree, sapping the foundations of His authority: so that all the ends of the earth are constrained to fear before Him.

This blessing is also called *justification*, a term which represents the blessed God, not as a sovereign, acting above law, but as a judge, proceeding according to law.

The law has been broken by the sinner; and he is therefore liable to the penalty of eternal death. But Christ has died in his stead. That death abundantly satisfies all the demands of the law. When, therefore, the sinner pleads that death in his own behalf, he is entitled, on principles of justice, to his acquittal. On this ground, he is justified. That is, the blessed God, in the character of a judge, declares him to be freed

from all liability to punishment.

In other places this blessing is called mercifulness and compassion to our sin. Our heavenly Father melts into tenderness at the sight of the returning prodigal, and receives him at once to His house and to But then our Father is holy as well as merciful. He hates the sin quite as much as He pities the sinner. If He is incapable of rejecting the prodigal, He is equally incapable of doing anything which would encourage His other children to imitate so bad an example. His entire household must be made to understand and to feel that it is "an evil and a bitter thing" to leave the house of such a Father, to go into a far country, and pursue a course of riotous living. These ends are accomplished by the sufferings and death of Christ. The Father has put into the hands of that well-beloved Son the cup of wrath and punishment which was due to our sin, and He drank it to the very dregs. The moral effect of all this is that our Father's justice and severity are made as conspicuous as His mercy. All His children respect His authority, while they admire His compassion. While they rejoice because their prodigal brother was dead, and is alive again, was lost, and is found, the steadfast purpose of each and all is to serve their Father in future, and never at any time to transgress His commands.

In other places this blessing is termed a blotting out of sin. Here the blessed God is represented under the notion of a creditor. The sinner, by what he has

done, and by what he has left undone, has become a debtor, to an incredible amount. Of course, he is wholly insolvent; for he can never make the slightest amends for what he has done. But Christ has died, and died for us. When the sinner pleads that death, by faith and prayer, it is placed to his account by the great Creditor; and then the debt is paid, and the debtor receives a discharge in full from all demands. When this is done, the entire record is blotted out, because it has become useless, and is consequently forgotten for ever.

VIII.

Convension.

THE reconciliation which God intends to accomplish is meant to secure the future obedience and devotion of the pardoned sinner. He is not to be pardoned in the way that Absalom was, who was first allowed to come back to Jerusalem, and then, after a time, to see the king, and finally to recover all that he had lost: but, at the same time, his pride and selfishness were not abated, in the slightest degree, and he instantly began to repay the kindness which had been shown him by stirring up disaffection; and at the first opportunity placed himself at the head of a rebellion so formidable as to compel his aged father to leave his capital, and which was intended to drive him from his throne. But no such hollow and unsatisfactory reconciliation can possibly take place between God and His offending creatures. Every pardoned sinner must be thoroughly humbled and converted, must cease to do evil, and learn to do well.

IX.

A Pardon Enjoyed.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. . . . Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.—Psa. ciii. 1, 3.

Sin is the transgression of the law; for a law there must be, and a law there actually is. God cannot be a Creator without being the fountain of law; nor can creatures exist, but as the subjects of law. In the language of the Holy Ghost, "There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy." He possesses not only all power and authority, but all wisdom, all holiness, and all goodness; and His law is an image of His own character, co-eval with His existence, wide as the universe, and permanent as eternity.

To this law all the intelligent creatures of God are subject. They may submit to it, or they may resist it; but they cannot escape from it. Both the greatest and the least will either flourish under its blessing, or be consumed by its curse. That there is such a law, and that it is in vigorous and constant operation, is as certain as that there is a God in heaven, and men upon earth; for it flows from His nature and attributes, and the relation subsisting between Him and His creatures, as necessarily as light from a flame, or streams from a fountain.

Every law has its penalty; and the language of the Divine law is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." An inspired writer affirms that "death,"—that is, the sentence of death,—"hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." To execute a merely human law is often a slow and uncertain process. After an offence has been committed, weeks and months, and even years, sometimes elapse before the offender is convicted and punished. Nay, in many cases, he escapes the vigilance of the police, or gets beyond the reach of their power, and is never brought to justice at all. But nothing of this kind can happen in the administration of the Divine government. God is the executor of his own law, and will, with infallible certainty, "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."

Filled with wonder and gratitude, David here exclaims, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." When the note of praise was once struck by the herald angel who announced the birth of Christ, it was taken up by thousands more of the heavenly host; so this song of the Psalmist is taken up by a number which no man can number, both in the church militant on earth, and the church triumphant in heaven. Two considerations tend to produce and cherish these feelings of gratitude and praise, viz.: The prodigious difficulty by which the pardon of sin was procured, and the vast importance of the blessing itself.

It may indeed be asked, "What difficulty can there be connected with the forgiveness of sin? As all power and authority centre in the Deity, surely, for Him to pardon the guilty is one of the easiest things in the world. It is but for Him to speak the word, and the work will be done." Probably all the criminals in the land, now under sentence of death, think it an easy thing for the sovereign to exercise in their behalf the royal prerogative of mercy. They can all say, "The power of life and death is vested in the crown; and it is but for the sovereign to order the instrument of pardon to be drawn up by a secretary, and then to affix to it the royal signature, and we are freed from all our present perils, and restored to our friends and all we hold dear."

But that which to criminals appears so easy, to lawgivers, and judges, and sovereigns, and all entrusted with the functions of government, has always appeared beset with difficulties, at once numerous and insurmountable. When Daniel had incurred the sentence of death, by violating the law of the Medes and Persians, his friendly sovereign laboured hard to save his life; but he was overpowered by circumstances; his nobles had the best of the argument; he was compelled by the force of reason to yield, and to order his faithful servant to be cast into the lions' den. Many other sovereigns have found themselves in a similar case, and have had to submit to a similar necessity. Had they been at liberty to follow the generous impulses of their own nature, they would at once have pardoned their guilty and condemned subjects; but by the nature of their office, and by the duties they owed to their people at large, they were compelled to sign the death-warrant of those they were so wishful to pardon and save.

All these difficulties are aggravated, a hundred and a thousand fold, when considered in connexion with the moral government of God. That the destruction of human souls is a thing altogether repugnant to the nature of their adorable Creator has been attested by Himself, and even confirmed with an oath; but our eternal state has to be determined by principles which are paramount to all merely compassionate considerations, and which are as unchangeable as God Himself. If it be necessary to uphold the laws of man, it is infinitely more necessary to uphold the laws of God. That is essential to the well-being, not of a nation merely, but of the entire intelligent universe. allowing that law to fall into contempt, God would deny and dishonour Himself, and inflict the deepest injury upon the work of His own hands.

Both the multitude and magnitude of the difficulties in the way of our pardon may be inferred from the wonderful, the unheard-of expedient, which was devised for the purpose of surmounting them. "With-

out controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh," and He "gave Himself a ransom for all." St. Paul affirms that Christ crucified is "the wisdom of God, and the power of God." By this expedient, insurmountable difficulties have been overcome, and impossibilities performed.

The principle of atonement is inadmissible in the government of men. All that human magistrates are authorised to do, is, to punish the guilty, and to protect the righteous; but they have no power to accept the life of the innocent as the price of the guilty, or to allow one man to die in the stead of another. Such an arrangement, effected by men, would be a complicated iniquity, and an offence to Him who is "Lord of all." But the things impossible with men are possible with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ had power to lav down His life. It was properly His own, and He had a right to lav it down as the ransom price of our lives. forfeited by sin, by dying in our room and stead. The almighty Father had a right to consent to such an arrangement, to accept the offer of His Son. to allow Him to become our substitute, and to lay upon Him the iniquity of us all. This accordingly has actually been done. By this mysterious and most singular, awful, profound, and glorious arrangement. God appears to be rigorously just, and His law is magnified, while yet its penalty is remitted, in favour of every penitent believer in Christ.

The Lord has made a new thing in the earth. God has come out of His place to rescue the race of Adam. Moral government has been affected by miracle. Human redemption is not merely a miracle, but of all miracles the most glorious. It is this novelty which has filled the universe with surprise. This is the matter of angelic songs, the theme of prophets and apostles. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He has arrested the course of the laws of nature. He has out off the connexion between seed-

time and harvest. He has rolled back the tide. He has stopped the whirlwind. He has bid the sun stand still. He has done more than all this; for He has conquered death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Whoever considers the death of Christ, and can say, "We have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," will be constrained to cry out, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift." By ways and means which eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had entered into the heart of man, He forgiveth all our iniquities.

Another consideration which deepens the same impression, and dictates the same language, is the greatness of the blessing itself. Whoever has had his sins forgiven must see that the benefit involved in this great act of mercy is "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Other benefits, like the stars of heaven, appear to him vast and innumerable: but the blessing of pardon appears like the sun "when he goeth forth in his strength," and fills his heart with light and gratitude and joy. We remember the case of the rich man and Lazarus, and the vast difference between them, as to their spiritual and eternal condition. Yet their state was once and originally the Both were born in sin, both were under condemnation; but by the rich man pardon was neglected; and as the sentence of the broken law was never remitted, by an act of sovereign grace, it was ordered to be carried into execution, "and in hell he kifted up his eyes." In the case of the poor beggar. pardon had been sought and obtained; and the great design of love was completed, and he was "carried by angels into Abraham's bosom." Every pardoned sinner is a brand plucked out of the burning, a soul delivered from the wrath to come, carried over the "great gulf" which, after death, it is impossible to pass, and put into the way that leads to glory and honour and immortality. No wonder that the consideration of so prodigious a benefit constrains him to cry out, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name."

X.

The Atonement.

Some years ago, a miserable creature, convicted of a capital offence, and about to receive sentence of death, fell upon her knees in open court, and in her wildness and agony addressing the Judge, said, "Oh, my Lord, is there no mercy?" His Lordship heard what she had to say, and then feelingly replied, "Unhappy woman, the law knows no mercy:" and its dreadful sentence was accordingly pronounced.

But the Judge of all the earth differs from all other judges, and the things impossible to them are possible to Him. He is a Sovereign as well as a Judge, and at once possesses infinite wisdom and supreme authority. Into His moral government He has admitted the principle of substitution. Christ has died in the sinner's stead. On the basis of that sacrifice, God can so administer the law as to maintain it in all its integrity, and at the same time to remit its penalty in the forgiveness of sin.

Every workman is known by his work. The redemption of the world is, emphatically, the work of God; and He has impressed His entire character upon the transaction. Had man been pardoned and taken to heaven without an atonement, this might have brought out some of the Divine perfections, but must have thrown others into the shade. Salvation on such a principle could not have displayed the wisdom of its author. Simple pardons generally operate as premiums upon disobedience, and prove to be foolish and mischievous things. Such tenderness to one

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solemnly declared His acceptance of the life of Christ in exchange for ours. The eternal Father originally appointed Jesus to be our Substitute, and we are assured that, as an expiatory sacrifice for our sins, He was highly grateful and acceptable to God. In proof of this, He has delivered all men and all things into the hands of Christ, and has rendered Him the absolute Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Although justification be pardon, as to its essence, it is a pardon of a peculiar kind; and, in some respects, differs from all the pardons with which we are already acquainted. A common pardon is an act above law; this is an act in strict accordance with law. A common pardon sets aside law; but this pardon establishes the law, by vindicating its claims, and maintaining its authority. A common pardon is an act of mere power and prerogative; but this is also an act of essential wisdom and holiness and truth. The ground of this difference is because an evangelical pardon proceeds upon the principle of sacrifice: it is forgiveness bestowed in consideration of an atonement.

To seek for forgiveness, without reference to the death of Christ, is not to submit to the law, but to seek its repeal. We may be pardoned according to law, but we must not seek forgiveness on a principle which is inconsistent with law; we must show our submission, while we evince a desire for mercy.

Many a pardoned criminal has been obliged to acknowledge that mercy towards him has been a calamity to the community. Others have been emboldened to violate the law, because he had escaped its righteous penalty. The benefit obtained has been diminished in his estimation, when he considers the calamities it is likely to entail upon his fellow-men.

But there is no such drawback upon the blessedness of a pardoned sinner. He is not merely forgiven, but justified. In his case, the law has been—not set aside by a mere act of authority, but magnified and made honourable by the expedient of an atonement. His pardon cannot encourage another to sin; and therefore his happiness will entail no calamity upon other people. While he is made a monument of mercy, all are deterred from the commission of sin; sinners are urged to repentance and faith; God is glorified in human salvation. There is no bitter in his cup, no sorrow in his joy, no abatement of his unbounded satisfaction.

XI.

"Merein is Love."

"He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—1 John iv. 10.

MUCH of the Divine benevolence is to be seen in creation, and in the daily dispensations of Providence; but, as the creation is subjected to a curse, in consequence of the sin of man, and as Providence is concerned in the infliction of punishment, as well as in the distribution of favours, the Divine character, when viewed through them, appears involved in obscurity. It is true we see much of goodness in the shining of the sun, and the descent of fertilizing showers; but we see much of wrath in the yawning earthquake, the raging storm, and the sweeping pestilence, by which innumerable thousands of human beings have been destroyed, and the scene of industry converted into a dreary and desolate wilderness. These facts have always confounded human sagacity, and prevented the wisest men from ascertaining, by any reasonings of their own from these premisses, what was the true character of God in relation to man.

But that "God is love," a Being of essential and infinite benevolence, is a truth which is now demonstrated by the redemption of the world

strated by the redemption of the world.

By this mysterious and amazing act Jesus Christ was constituted the legal substitute of the guilty and condemned race of Adam. Although the Father was united to the Son by an infinite endearment, and had contemplated Him with unmingled and unbounded delight from eternity; yet He now determined to put Him in the place of sinning men, and to inflict upon Him the fearful penalty which they had deserved. The "only-begotten Son" was made to stand at the head of a long line of criminals, all under sentence of death, and to receive and drink that fearful cup of wrath which had been mingled for them. Our adorable Saviour freely consented to occupy this station, and to receive this treatment. The essence of His sufferings appears to have consisted in His legal subjection to the punishment due to sin, and its solemn infliction by the hands of the eternal Father. Other things were the mere attendants on His mortal agony; but by this His whole soul was occupied and impressed. With bad men and wicked spirits He could easily contend; but to be treated as a sinner, and to be so treated by His own Father, constrained Him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

St. John invites us to notice and admire the prodigious love displayed in this unparalleled arrangement. That God did love us is certain: to say how much He loved us is impossible. What shall be said of the man who gives up his all to benefit another? We know the extent of his ability, but not of His love. God had but one—an only-begotten—Son, and in giving Him, He gave His all. The extent of His love it is impossible to ascertain. It not only comes up to the very top of all the banks and boundaries with which we are acquainted, but it overflows and covers them all. It "passeth knowledge." Hence

St. Paul speaks of "the exceeding riches of His grace." In Him there is indeed "grace," there are "riches of grace," there are "exceeding riches of grace;" but it far exceeds all that we can say, and all that we can imagine. St. Peter tells us that into the redeeming scheme "angels desire to look." Their intellects are more piercing than ours, and there are depths in this ocean, unknown to us, but clear to them; yet they cannot fathom it.

"God only knows the love of God."

XII.

"In the Maly Chast."

"Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost."—I Thess. i. 5.

ALTHOUGH the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim succeeded in effecting the death of Christ, and very likely persuaded themselves that when He was once out of the world they should hear no more of Him or His cause; yet we soon after find these very men complaining that the apostles had "filled Jerusalem" with their doctrine. Christianity still lives. It has often fallen into the hands of some of the worst of More wicked men never existed than some who have occupied influential stations in the visible church. The Gospel has been persecuted by its enemies, and corrupted and betrayed by its professed friends. Philosophers and scholars, calling themselves Christians, have laboured with all their might to explain away its vital principles. It has been employed as an instrument in accomplishing the most criminal designs. But it still lives, and works; and fulfils its great purpose of mercy to the souls of men.

This is accounted for in these words of the apostle. In the counsels of the Eternal it was always arranged

that when Jesus Christ should leave this world. He should be succeeded by God the Holy Ghost. Divine Spirit was to take up the work which He had begun, and to carry out the ends of His life and This was distinctly intimated to the apostles, for the purpose of assuaging the grief they felt at the intended removal of their Master. While there are three Persons in the Godhead, they are one in essence. one in will, and one in action. As the Holy Ghost was to come to the church on earth, so He was to be sent by the Father, at the express request of the This great arrangement has been carried into full effect. The Holy Ghost has connected Himself with the people and work of Christ, never to leave them again. Christianity is a system of truth and grace, filled and actuated by a living and omnipotent Spirit. In the great and comprehensive blessing which He bestows many particulars are included, two only of which we now notice.

1. He enables men to understand the Scriptures. The Bible has been given to be read, expounded, and diligently considered. While this is done in a proper spirit and manner, the Holv Ghost opens our understanding, that we may understand the Scriptures. Of these Divine writings we are, properly speaking, altogether ignorant until we discover the reality, necessity, and value of that salvation of which they so constantly speak. A man cannot be said to be thoroughly acquainted with a field, so long as he knows merely the qualities of its soil, and the amount of produce it is likely to yield. In order to this, he must penetrate beneath the surface, and ascertain what is to be found below. We are told the Gospel of Christ is like "treasure hid in a field." Like a field, the Bible has a richly variegated surface, covered with trees and flowers, and verdure and beauty; but its real value consists in the precious ores which are buried in its depths. Here many are content to read and walk,

and taste the fruits, and admire the prospect spread before them; while they remain utterly ignorant of the riches that lie beneath their feet. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit we find the hid treasure. Far beneath this surface of flowers and verdure, we see pardon, and holiness, and eternal life. We are made to understand their prodigious value, and to form a deep and settled purpose that the Bible, and all its blessings, shall be ours. We must therefore always connect prayer with our reading and teaching of the Scriptures, and seek to secure the gracious direction and assistance of their Divine Author.

2. The Holy Ghost also enables the true believer to ascertain that he is now in a state of favour and acceptance with God. All such persons are not only saved from punishment, but constituted the children of God. But how can a man ascertain an act which has taken place in the mind of God, and which, from the nature of the thing, can be known only to Himself? How this is done, we cannot tell; but that it is done, we are expressly assured, on the highest authority. Though not done by any audible voice, or verbal testimony, it is followed by similar effects. The believer is made to experience all that love to God, all that peace and joy, which would have been produced by a messenger sent from heaven to assure him of his adoption.

Still, there are many sincere and thoughtful people who remain in darkness and doubt. In some cases, this state of mind arises from physical or mental disease, but more generally from a partial repentance, and a defective faith. Some sins have been given up, but others are still held fast; and because we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not show us His salvation. There may be a kind of faith in Christ, while we never exercise that faith which realizes an interest in His blood, and brings deliverance from the guilt of sin. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman,

"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water;" and this inward blessedness many of us have not, because we ask not. While it is a fact that many professing Christians pass their days in gloom and uncertainty; while it is a fact that this, in most cases, is entirely owing to lukewarmness and unbelief; it is at the same time equally a fact that the Holy Ghost is connected with the Gospel, and that it is His office to bear witness to the spirit of the believer that he is a child of God. This witness, therefore, may be attained and enjoyed by us, it may be received by faith, now; we may live in this light, and walk in this liberty, and exult in this blessedness.

By the bestowment of this witness, the Holy Spirit meets the great necessity of the human soul, satisfies its cravings, and gives it an abiding enjoyment. Jesus said, when sitting by the well of Sychar, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst;" but it "shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." Persons of all ages and conditions find much in the world which is like cold water to a thirsty soul; and at this fountain they drink deeply, and with delight. Yet the truth of the Redeemer's words is sure to be realized in human experience. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again." But when the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, then we drink of the water Christ has to bestow, and thirst no more. When a believer has received the Holy Spirit in all His evangelical fulness, then he is enabled to do the will of God, as well as to suffer it; and to live a holy life, as well as to die a martyr's death. All his moral needs are met; and his language is,

[&]quot;O love, thou bottomless abyss!
My sins are swallowed up in thee."

There is much of disorder and misery prevalent in the world, and all owing to a defective morality. to our police courts, see the misery which prevails in many families, and all because their morals are bad. Bad morals have built our jails, and given rise to all the misery endured by the criminals confined in them. Bad morals have corrupted the principles of trade, occasioned all sorts of political abuses, covered man with dishonour, and filled the world with lamentation and mourning and woe. Christianity corrects men's morals by the diffusion of its own principles, and raises them to newness of life by giving them a new How does the Gospel produce that pure and sublime morality which is so beneficial to the world? All good principles and actions are called "the fruits of the Spirit." They spring from His presence and operations in the heart; just as the branches, the blossoms, and the fruits of a tree, all spring out of the root, when it is alive and buried in the earth. But how does the Spirit bring men to practise this pure and lofty morality? It is done when He sheds the love of God abroad in the heart. The Holy Spirit becomes our Sanctifier by first acting as our Comforter. We are made holy by being first made happy. It is the office of the Spirit to comfort all that mourn, to heal the broken-hearted; and the practical result is, that they become "trees of righteousness." In the first age of the church, believers walked "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost;" and then they "were multiplied," for men saw their good works, and glorified their Father who is in heaven.

XIII.

The Eure of Unbelief.

Some sincere seekers of mercy complain that they cannot come to Christ for salvation, and find it impossible to believe in His name. But difficulties which

are very formidable in the dark are often easily surmounted in the light of day. A traveller in the night may find a wall or a river to cross his path, and feel himself unable to proceed: but daylight may enable him to discover a door through the one, and a bridge over the other, so that he can pursue his journey

without any difficulty.

Our Lord said to His hearers, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." There is a wonderful power in evangelical truth and knowledge to break the chains and remove the obstructions which hinder men from believing in Christ. At first it appeared utterly impossible to Naaman that a man so great and wise as himself should submit to a ridiculous ceremony, and go and plunge seven times in the river Jordan, as the prophet directed. But when he heard the remonstrances of his servants, his passion subsided, he obtained correcter views, and then deemed it prudent to accept a cure of such a frightful malady on such easy terms. To the venerable apostle Peter it appeared difficult, and indeed impossible, that he should openly confess his Master in the hall of the high priest; but after the day of Pentecost his evangelical knowledge was greatly increased. He had become better acquainted with "the truth," and the truth had made him "free." What was impossible to ignorance was by light and knowledge rendered not merely easy, but unavoidable. When charged by the Sanhedrim not to teach or preach any more in the name of Jesus, he replied that avowing his Master was now with him become matter of imperative necessity; "for," said he, "we cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."

All you want is to know more of Christ.

PART SECOND.

T.

"The Seed is the Word of God."

Luke viii. 11.

THE Protestant Reformation was undoubtedly the most remarkable and glorious revolution that has taken place since the introduction of Christianity. mighty movement of the human mind a prodigious mass of ignorance, of error, of oppression, and of misery, which had been collecting for ages, was thrown off; and a great public relief and easement has been experienced ever since. By means of the Reformation, the once fashionable principle and the ancient practice of a formal persecution on account of matters purely religious have been exposed in all their wickedness, and have sunk into disuse; and the fires of Smithfield are likely to blaze no more. The principles of civil government are now far better understood, our political rights secured, and our liberties greatly enlarged. Industry has also been promoted, trade has been increased, and our general circumstances thereby greatly improved. Literature and philosophy have been cultivated, corrected, and wonderfully extended. Best of all, there has been a glorious revival of pure religion. Human hearts have been renewed in love, multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and, after a course of eminent holiness and usefulness, have died, full of peace and hope. It is true that a great deal of folly and of wickedness have, at different times, connected themselves with this great work of God. It has also experienced many checks and drawbacks. But, upon the whole, there has been a steady march of improvement; and we are looking for the millennium, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The Reformation was produced by the study of the The men who sighed over the frightful corruptions and abuses which at that time prevailed in the church of Christ, were driven to make their appeal Then they set themselves to carry out to the Bible. into practical effect the lessons and principles contained in that holy Book; and this produced the Reformation. While, therefore, such a stream of blessings is rolling down to ourselves and to succeeding generations, let us not lose sight of that Divine source from whence they all proceed. We reap a golden and a glorious harvest, and that harvest will continue to be reaped when we are gathered to our fathers; but it all springs from one seed, and "the seed is the Word of God." We cannot be too deeply impressed with a sense of the value of that Word, and of the benefits to be derived by those who humbly and entirely yield themselves to its guidance and government.

The Sacred Scriptures proceed from God. They were at first spoken by Him to men; and "as the heavens are high above the earth," so far all that God speaks is, in truth and importance, above all that has been or can be uttered by any of His creatures. Prophets, evangelists, and apostles were the Almighty's secretaries; and merely wrote down what had been first communicated to them by Him. At least this is the account which the sacred writers themselves give of the matter. And the character of the Holy Scriptures is in perfect accordance with this explanation of their origin. They contain an account of God, of His being, His nature, His attributes, His purposes, and His works, such as could only have been given by Him-

self. The apostles could not have invented the Gospel, had they attempted it. One of them has justly observed. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Had not these truths been revealed, the apostles could never have known them at all; for they are so supernatural and transcendent in their very nature that, in any other way, the conception of them could never have entered into the human mind.

The religion which the Bible teaches must have proceeded from God; for it is the very worship and service of heaven. Its morality is so pure and sublime that it must have been derived from Him who is the source of all law, of all reason, and of all truth and goodness. The miracles wrought in defence of the Scriptures prove them to be the words of an almighty Being. who can do whatever He will; and the fulfilment of the prophecies demonstrates that they were spoken by

Him who sees the end from the beginning.

All that happens to those who neglect the Scriptures, and to those who regard them, is a still further evidence of their Divine origin. Neglect of the Bible is the simple cause of all the wickedness around us; but those who honestly and prayerfully submit themselves to its teaching, prove, by its wonderful efficacy upon their own hearts, that it is the Word of Him who has all power over the spirits of His creatures. They have in themselves a blessed evidence that it came from God; for it leads them to the knowledge of God in this world, and to the enjoyment of Him in the world to come.

The power of God resides in the simple truths of the Gospel, and has nothing at all to do with human additions or improvements. All these only tend to embarrass the Word of God, to impair its efficiency. and to hinder its effects. That Word is here said to be a "seed." Now, every husbandman knows that the vital principle of fruitfulness is inherent in the seed, and that the more naked and pure the state of that seed, when thrown into the earth, the more vigorously will that principle work, and the more abundant will the harvest be. Accordingly, in preparing his seed, he proceeds to separate it from the straw by thrashing, and then from the chaff by winnowing; and if he still find it mixed up with something else, he does not cast it into the ground until he has made

it thoroughly clean.

Now, herein is one of the grand distinctions between Popery and Protestantism. Popery does not reject the Word of God: it acknowledges the authority of the whole of the sacred canon; but then it causes this to be mixed up with a variety of human devices. Metaphysical speculations; fragments of Judaism and heathenism; ceremonies and traditions, without end, Some of these were invented by good men, and some by bad men: some by wilful sinners, and some by mistaken saints. Some of them are good; some, indifferent; and some, positively bad. Yet all these things are strangely mixed up with the Word of God, said to possess the same authority and obligation, and to be

equally necessary to human salvation.

But "the Bible, the Bible alone," is the religion of All merely human inventions, whatever Protestants. show of wisdom they may possess, are like the chaff exposed to the winds and driven away. These, it is plain, can never produce spiritual and eternal salvation. That is not "of ourselves" at all: "it is the gift of God." These splendid additions are of no use, and we do not want them. The pure and simple Word of God alone is "the seed" sown in the hearts of men; and we trust entirely to that to produce a harvest of holiness and peace. All that is needed is "an honest That Word only requires us to treat it heart." When it is thus received, it is accompanied by the energy of the Holy Ghost. Salvation is the harvest; and "the seed is the Word of God."

II.

Tradition and Faith.

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Matt. xv. 9.

The fault of these scribes and Pharisees was not in paying too much attention to the opinions of their elders, but too little to the Word of God. Many of their rabbins were wise and learned men, and their opinions were entitled to respect; but whatever the greatest men may say, no man is authorized to teach anything, as matter of dootrine, until he has, by earnest and prayerful meditation, satisfied himself that it bears the stamp of a Divine authority, and is an announcement of the Divine mind and will.

The true difference between the spirit of tradition and the spirit of faith appears to be this: God has given His Word to mankind. Certain wise and learned men have told us what they conceive to be its meaning. The spirit of tradition is satisfied with their interpretation, and thinks no more about the matter. But while the spirit of faith treats all men with respect, it, at the same time, thinks and prays about the Word of God. in order to ascertain its true intent and meaning.

In this spirit our Protestant Reformation had its origin. Luther felt himself to be a sinner; and the question ever uppermost in his soul was, "What must I do to obtain peace and acceptance with God?" Very many wise and learned men told him to observe certain ceremonies, and to submit to certain bodily austerities. But Luther found a Bible in his monastery, and studied it thoroughly, with earnest prayer. In this way he learnt that a man is "justified by faith." He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoiced in the possession of forgiveness and acceptance with God. That revival which we call Methodism proceeded, not from the spirit

of tradition, but from the spirit of faith. When John Wesley was so wishful to find the way to heaven, there were many learned men who constantly taught that justification, adoption, and regeneration were all included in baptism; and that with the sacraments of the church we receive all we can need or desire. But John Wesley was "a man of one book." He despised no man's opinion; but he studied the Bible with prayer, by night and by day. The result was that he became convinced there was a work of God to be wrought in the soul of man. He sought and obtained a manifested pardon, and enjoyed a heaven begun below.

But there are many among ourselves who bear the Protestant name without sharing in the blessedness enjoyed by the holy martyrs of the Reformation. Numbers attend the Wesleyan ministry who are strangers to the experience of the early Methodists. This is to be attributed to the unhappy prevalence of the spirit of tradition. One man believes according to the doctrine of the Church of England; another prefers the teaching of the Wesleyans; but they have not seriously read the Bible with reference to personal salvation, nor ever set themselves, by meditation and prayer, to ascertain what is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning themselves.

This is a very perilous and unsatisfactory condition; for the spirit of tradition gives rise to the most dangerous delusions. These scribes and Pharisees read the Bible; then their rabbins and learned men told them what it meant. They embraced these interpretations, and gave themselves no further trouble on the subject. Accordingly, we find them imposing on themselves by the grossest delusions. Think only, for instance, of the manner in which the Jewish doctors had interpreted the fifth commandment (Matt. xv. 5, 6). When God said, "Honour thy father and thy mother," He meant that a child, when able, should sustain and provide for his parents in sickness or des-

titution. According to the teaching of the Jewish doctors, if a child, even in a fit of anger, said to his parents,-"I have property, which you greatly need; but I have dedicated it, and now it belongs to the temple," he thereby put it out of his power to relieve his father or his mother. So that in truth these doctors exercised an authority higher than that of the Almighty. In this way, by a shallow human trick, they thought to frustrate the purposes of Him who is infinitely wise and good. But all this is simply delusion. God's authority cannot be set aside by the artful contrivances of man. Doctors might say they were authorized to explain the Divine law; and the common people might plead the authority of their learned and religious guides; but "though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Many dangerous and fatal delusions are likely to happen to ourselves, if we rest merely in what others say about religion. Each must study the subject for himself; and by earnest meditation and prayer continue to seek until he find the "pearl of great price."

Everywhere, the Bible tells men that the human heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But the Pharisees were washing their hands, and neglecting their hearts; purifying cups and pots and vessels, and forgetting that a mighty engine of wickedness was constantly at work within them, more and more depraying their nature. Can there be a spectacle more pitiable than this? People can easily explain such passages away, and deprive them of their power to alarm; and many adopt these explanations, and think no more about the matter. But did men fix their attention on the Word of God, and meditate seriously upon its declarations, triflers would soon begin to pray. It may be that our scholarship is defective, that our memories are treacherous, and that we have but little time for searching the Scriptures; but the great mistake is, that on the subject of religion we content ourselves with adopting the opinions and the language of other people. Did we but think of the Bible as scholars think of literary subjects, as philosophers think of questions of science, and as tradesmen think of the ways and means of gaining money, its deep and hidden meaning would be unfolded to our view.

This spirit of faith would cause hope to spring up in our souls. How came the early Methodists to expect the forgiveness of sins, and the witness of the Spirit; and to pray until the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts? By what means were they led to embrace the doctrine of entire sanctification, and, many of them, to pray and believe until the blessing was realized in their happy experience? All was the result of their examining the Scriptures, each man for himself. The more they read, and the more they thought, the more they were astonished at the truth and grace which appeared in the Word of God. They became persuaded that what He had promised He was able and willing to perform; and according to their faith, it was done unto them.

Men, in general, are content to understand the promises as other people understand them; and in that way they are dismissed and forgotten. Hence they are heard to say, "Many excellent persons know nothing of this forgiveness, and of this new heart: and it would be presumption in me to expect what they have never attained." But the spirit of faith would teach them better things. The Bible is God's message to you. Its contents are a matter between God and your soul. In this case, you have nothing to do with other people, and they have nothing to do with you. It is your simple business to consider who it is that speaks, and what He has to say. When, in this way, you have done with "the commandments of men," and become wholly occupied with the "doctrines" of God, you will soon find hope springing up in your souls. You will say, "Here are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; these are all yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all these things?"

III.

"I will meditate in Thy Paecepts."

Psa. cxix. 78.

WHEN, by the grace of God, we are made to understand and love the Bible, a change takes place in our The man who is ignorant of the Bible thinks there is nothing greater than this world, and that, if he can obtain its riches and honours, he will have all that it is possible for him to gain. He is like the child who looks up to the top of the hill which bounds the little valley where stands the cottage in which he was born, and who, having no idea of anything beyond, fancies that to be the utmost limit of the world, and that he has seen all that is beneath the sun. But when we are brought to understand the Bible, a new world is uncovered to our view, and this world is brought down to its proper place in the estimation of an immortal and accountable being. is a mighty benefit which the Bible bestows in thus regulating the affections of the human mind, by withdrawing them from the creature, and fixing them upon the Creator.

Our thoughts commonly follow our affections; and when we are taught to love and prize the matters contained in the Bible, we shall be led to think a great deal about them. The man who has discovered his title to a rich and valuable inheritance will hardly go away and think no more about the matter. Most probably he will meditate upon it by day, and even dream about

it by night. If ever we get a sight of the "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," which the Bible makes known,—if ever we see how certainly it belongs to us, and how easily we may make it our own,—this matter will take a powerful hold of our minds, and we shall think a great deal about it. It is said that Columbus discovered a "new world;" and was it possible for him to forget what he had done? Yet that new world, after all, was only half of the old one. If we have read our Bible, and not discovered what is more valuable than the whole world, we have read it to no purpose. We must read it again. We never understand it until we find in it something which we cannot

forget.

It is a prodigious blessing to a young man when his attention is thus arrested by the Bible, and his thoughts habitually settle upon the matters it contains. This is a mighty instrument in promoting his own peace and happiness, and will produce effects which are agreeable to others as well as profitable to himself. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." In all cases where the Bible is understood and loved and considered, it will become the subject of our conversation. Not that it will make us all preachers; nor will it lead us to be always repeating texts of Scripture; but it will banish all words of bitterness, falsehood, and impurity, and cause our speech to be "seasoned with salt," and calculated to "minister grace unto the hearers." Who can tell the vast importance of this? If it be true that "for every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account in the day of judgment," then how many will have cause to regret the bad habits acquired in their youth. Besides, the conversation of all classes is not without its effect upon those of the same age and station. Bad language, among young people, operates like a moral pestilence.

It is the "vain thoughts" which "lodge within"

them which render the general conduct of irreligious young people so improper. The Word of God is like the cruse of salt which the prophet cast into the waters of Jericho, and which made them sweet, and fit for use. When that Word becomes the subject of our meditation, the fountain of our thoughts is healed and purified; and the stream of our words and actions is rendered acceptable to God, and profitable to men. Indeed, this habit has such a powerful influence upon our general character and condition, that it is sure to end in eternal happiness.

IV.

The Bible.

IF we suppose, as some seem to do, that the perfection of man consists in the possession of certain worldly advantages, and in the full development of his bodily and intellectual powers, then, of course, we shall conclude that his one business is to preserve his health by suitable diet and exercise, to improve his mind by reading and study, and to increase his earthly advantages by pushing his fortune in the world. To a person entertaining such views as these, the Bible will appear to be an almost useless book. But one who is persuaded that man's chief good is to glorify God, and enjoy Him for ever,—that he is an angel in infancy, and his nature will never be perfect until he is made as the angels, by being brought to know and love and serve God as they do,—has reason to say, "O how love I Thy law;" for the Bible is the instrument by which this great and glorious end is to be attained. He therefore studies its doctrines, walks by its rules, waits for the fulfilment of its promises, and in this manner looks to attain his perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul.

No doubt the Maker of the world could have given us a very perfect system of philosophy, had He deemed it right to do so. He could have told us all we wish to know about the heavens and the earth. have explained to us the very principles by which all created matter is held together and exists. He could have given us a complete theory of politics, and laid down the laws by which nations rise and fall, flourish and decay. But He has not done so. He has said little on such subjects, because there are others which it more especially concerns us to know. It chiefly concerns a sick and dving man to know how he is to get well. A man in pain wishes to know what will give him ease. A traveller wishes, first of all, to know the right road. A fallen soul specially needs to know how it is to be saved. Immortal man wants to be taught how he may

"— glorify his God below, And find his way to heaven."

It was to give us information on this subject that the Son of God came from heaven. In His communications to man He confined His attention specially to this. He said little about philosophy, little about politics; it was all about salvation; and unless we suppose ourselves to be wiser than our Maker, we shall bend our attention principally to this one point, and "give all diligence to be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

The great and capital miseries which afflict mankind are moral in their nature. They were produced by a moral cause; and they only admit of a moral cure. It is true the human race is weighed down by an accumulated mass of outward and physical wretchedness. The world is full of rags and famine, poverty and want, public wars and private strife, cruelty, neglect, and oppression. But although these are evils which

affect the body, the root of the mischief is in the heart; and it is to that part of our nature that the remedy must be applied. Men's outward circumstances are so bad chiefly because their hearts are so bad : and their conduct is wrong because their spiritual state is wrong. Were they brought to repentance, restored to the favour of God, and prevailed upon to love and obey Him, light would spring up in the midst of darkness, their sorrow would be turned into joy, and their very afflictions changed into blessings. No remedy but this will ever be effectual. Suffering humanity will never be effectually relieved by the extension of trade or the advance of commerce, by the promotion of industry, by political revolutions, or by any other outward and physical application whatever; but by the power of God's Word, controlling, and subduing, and correcting the heart. When the heart is won over to God and holiness by the power of mingled light and love, then the case of man is reached, and his sad condition really and effectually relieved.

The Word which is to effect this must be Divine: Not human speculation, but Divine revelation; not the guesses and opinions of ignorant and erring mortals, but the authoritative, and living, and infallible Word of God. Not the discoveries of the philosophers, or the comments of the doctors, or the opinions of the Rabbins; but the simple Word of God. In this there is power, when it is perceived and apprehended by the mind, to render man intelligent, and holy, and happy, and all that he ought to be in this world, as well as to prepare him for a better.

Who can estimate the worth of the Bible? It acquaints us with principles equally efficient to preserve the healthy from temptation, the sick from impatience, and the dying from despair. It teaches us how to subdue our passions, to trample upon the world, and to triumph over death.

Every dispensation of Providence, however calamitous, provided it does but increase our attention to the Word of God, is sure to issue in our advantage. may lose property, friends, health,—but if these losses drive us to the Bible, and compel us to think of it more, to believe it more, to live upon it more, we are sure to be gainers by our loss.

V:

The Wictory.

4 Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

To serve mammon is to desire and seek and trust in riches, honours, and pleasures, and such other things as earth can give. To serve God is to be habitually under the influence of a principle of religion. piety, in all its stages,—from the tears and prayers of a penitent sinner, to the lofty fervours of a scraph,—is but different degrees of love to God. In the hearts of many professing Christians there is going on a fearful struggle and conflict between these two principles. But this can continue only for a time.

Unless our love of the world be mortified and subdued, it will pursue a series of aggressions and encroachments, until it has choked and destroyed every better and holy principle, and brought us to have our portion in this life. It is therefore obviously our wisdom and duty, by the use of all suitable means, to seek to expel it from our hearts, and to see that our love to God is increased and made perfect. Then comes the question, "How is this to be accomplished?"

There are three ways of gaining this end which have engaged the attention of mankind. The first is a human invention: the second has been suggested by a disembodied spirit: and the third is that which God

Himself has been pleased to appoint.

When we speak of a way devised by man, to cure himself of the love of the world, we refer especially to that system which embraces the hermitage and the convent, and which prevails so generally in the church According to this scheme, a rich man, in order to free himself from the love of the world, and become filled with the love of God, should give his property to the church, and make himself as poor as Lazarus. In this way, tens of thousands, both of men and women, have sought the attainment of a perfect Scripture and experience, however, unite love to God. in assuring us that there is no power in a hermitage or a cloister to produce any such change in the temper and habits of a human mind. Men may love the world in the deepest poverty, and forget God in solitude, as well as in company. If ever a human soul is lifted from earth to heaven, it must be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." power but that which raised Christ from the dead ever did, or ever will, bring a man to delight himself "in the Lord," and to set his affections "on things above."

But there is a second way by which men have been directed to seek the attainment of this end. That was suggested by the departed spirit of the rich man, after he found himself in a place of torment, and "saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." in his attempt to obtain help for himself, this unhappy man next turned his attention to the members of his family, and asked that Lazarus might be sent to warn his five brethren. So confident was he of the efficiency of this method of curing the carnality of the human heart, that when some objection was made to his proposal, he proceeded to urge and press its adoption. "Nay, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." In making this request the man seems to have mistaken the cause both of his own perdition and of the continued impenitence of his surviving brethren. What they needed was—not a messenger from the invisible world,—but a Divine and gracious power, which should turn the stream and current of their thoughts and affections into another channel. A worldly-minded man was not likely to be diverted from his purpose by the visit of a disembodied spirit. He would, perhaps, for a time fear and tremble; then, doubt; and finally, disbelieve. Such a communication would soon come to be treated as was the Gospel message, when people "made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." An apparition might interrupt the flow of earthly affections for a time, just as the Jordan was divided by a miracle. But the stream soon returned to its course, filled up its ample bed, and overflowed its banks, as it had done before.

But we have also God's appointed method for turning a human heart from the world, and fixing it upon Himself. When Abraham was requested to send Lazarus to warn impenitent sinners on earth, he said, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." When further told of the deep impression likely to be made by such a visit, he replied, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be

persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

There have been put into our hands the Old and New Testaments,—Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles, the law and the Gospel. In this inspired book is contained the history of "God manifest in the flesh." Here we are to read the story of Incarnate God; and to behold His glory, "full of grace and truth." While we read, we are also directed to pray for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened. What effect is likely to be produced upon us by this acquaintance with Christ, we may partly infer from what has been said respecting the apostles. So deeply were they affected by what they saw and heard in their Master, that, even in the

days of His humiliation, they "left all, and followed" Him. One of them spoke the general and undoubted sentiments of his brethren, when he said, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now? I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Paul had believed in Christ crucified till he could say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world." Riches, honour, and pleasure displayed their charms. and sought to gain his attention; but he had no eves to see, no ears to hear, no heart to feel. In all these things he was more than conqueror through Him that had loved him. Why did the first Christians live so holily, and die so triumphantly? The "love of Christ" constrained them to live, not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

Make a right use of the Word of God, and you will be saved from the love of the world; you will catch

their spirit, and love God as they loved Him.

VI.

Religious Growth.

In the judgment of the all-wise God, religion, personal religion, experimental and practical religion, is, of all important things, the most important. In all the wonderful things that He has done from the beginning of the world, His great end has been to preserve and extend personal religion. Apostles laboured to spread Christianity, and martyrs died in its defence; and all for the sake of personal religion.

Personal religion is a principle of inward and spiritual life, and, according to the Scriptures, consists in nothing but *love*: love to God, and love to man. We have heard, indeed, of religious jealousies, and religious controversies, and religious wars, and even religious murders; but it is no uncommon thing for parties to

dispute about what they do not understand, and even to contend and fight for what they never did and never will enjoy. Religion is often hated and abused, as if it were the source of all the injustice and misery which are in the world. Still, the truth is, that "God is love;" and true religion is to love Him, "because He first loved us," and to love all mankind for His sake. Our Lord says that "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Religion is not only love in its principle, but in all its actions and manifestations. All the duties enjoined in the Bible emanate from this principle; just as all the clusters of grapes on a vine are produced from one root, and therefore partake of the same nature.

To persons who already possess the principle of true religion, and who wish to know how it is to be retained and increased, the apostle Peter says, "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." If you wish to grow in grace, and to be made perfect in love to God and man, you must abstain from all those mental acts and habits which are likely to feed and nourish the carnal mind; and you must apply your minds to those studies that are likely to strengthen the new principle which has been implanted within you. "Malice" and "guile," and "hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking," are but so many forms of the carnal mind, and these are all fed and sustained by certain mistaken mental habits.

What is it, for instance, which feeds the carnal mind in the form of "malice?" Possibly you have received certain injuries at the hands of a fellow creature. Perhaps he has possessed himself of a portion of your property, or damaged your reputation, or wounded your feelings, by something he has said. These things you cannot forget; but think of them when alone, talk of them when in company, and perhaps dream of

them in your sleep, until you are as full of malice,

almost, as Cain when he slew his brother.

What is it which fosters the principle of all "guile" and "hypocrisies?" Is it not the habit of thinking on all the poor, little, petty advantages which earth has to bestow? Your mind dwells on them until you become inflamed with a desire to make them your own. It is commonly for the sake of these things that men are led to deceive and over-reach one another.

How is the feeling of envy kept alive in the soul? Is it not by allowing the mind to dwell upon the points of difference between ourselves and other people? Possibly another has more power and honour than you possess. It may be that his furniture and equipages are all far better than your own. It may be that he is receiving the most flattering attentions, while you are overlooked and forgotten. So you think on these things, and become filled with envy and uneasiness.

What is the true source of all that evil speaking which abounds in the church and in the world? "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We have much to say of the faults of other people just because we think a great deal about them.

If you wish the principle of love within you to thrive and grow, you must lay all these pursuits aside; you must desist from all these habits of thought. When these things are dismissed and forgotten, malice, and guile, and envy, and evil-speaking, with all their kindred evils, will begin to fade, like a tree when it has no root, and is seen to wither away.

Then, if you would have your love to God and man to increase and grow, you must allow your minds to fix and settle upon very different subjects,—subjects which are infinitely more deserving of your attention. You are to desire and feed upon "the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby." All the revelations contained in the Bible are calculated to

nourish the principle of love to God and man; just as milk tends to strengthen the new-born babe. Mary sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His words. The Psalmist exclaims, "Oh! how love I Thy law; it is my meditation all the day." Religion is a principle of love; and the Bible is the history of the God of love, the development of that purpose of redeeming love which He had purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world, and an offer of all the blessings which flow from infinite and eternal love. This Word is the milk which nourishes the life of love, the fuel which feeds the fire of love, and the soil and atmosphere in which the plant of love is sure to thrive and grow.

The measure of our love to God will always be proportioned to the apprehensions we have of His love to us. By an humble and earnest study of the Bible our views will be enlarged until our hearts burn within us, and we love the Lord our God with all our heart. If you wish to be happy on earth, and to be prepared for heaven—here is the way, walk ye in it. To contemplate God's love to us in Christ, and to love Him in return, will be the employment of glorified spirits for ever.

Waste not another day in allowing your minds needlessly to dwell upon the faults of other people, upon the good things, or upon the bad things, of which this world is full. Turn your attention to that account of Himself which God has given in His Word, and you will soon become filled with gratitude, humility, and love.

VII.

The Traveller and his Guide.

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."—Psa. cxix. 54.

HUMAN life is a journey, and every man is a travel-He travels from the cradle to the grave, through time into eternity. He is obliged to move on and on, until the shades of the evening settle about him, and, wearied and exhausted, he drops upon his dusty bed, and sleeps the sleep of death. In these words, the human traveller appears before us with a Bible in his hand, and pursuing his way amid all the wonders and glories of Divine revelation. When this is the case, the journey of life resembles the passing of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. That journey was marked by signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. God was with His people; and they proceeded under His special direction. His presence was their light, their glory, and their salvation. The Bible is the Divine Shekinah. From age to age, God is present with His written Word. All those human travellers who embrace, and submit to, and study that Word, derive from it, during their journey through life, greater advantages than were enjoyed by the people of Israel, and are led to a better country. The writer of this psalm shared in all the difficulties and sorrows of the journey of life; but it was his happiness to be acquainted with the statutes of God, and these shed such a light upon his path, and poured such consolation into his soul, and opened before him such a prospect, that he was filled with joy, and the very hills became vocal with their echo to his songs. On the road, and in the resting house,—whether travelling by day, or halting for the night,—he was still singing the praises of his God.

Some persons tell us that the present world is altogether an unsatisfactory thing. In their estimation, it resembles—so far, at least, as the mind is concerned— "Here," say they, a waste and desolate wilderness. "is neither meat nor drink which can satisfy the cravings of an immortal mind; nor even a place of refuge in which a delicate and sensitive spirit may hide herself from the pitiless peltings of the storm to which she is continually exposed." Many of these parties began life with very large expectations, none of which have been realized; and after experiencing one disappointment after another, their spirits are utterly sunk and broken, and they are ready to say, respecting earthly things, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit," and pass their lives in murmuring and complaint. Some even lay violent hands upon themselves, and thereby insolently fling back to God the gifts they received at His hands.

Men ought to recollect that this world was never intended by its Maker to be the substitute of Himself. It was meant to be inhabited by His friends and children; and while they were content to enjoy it in connexion with His favour and presence, they found it all that they could desire. But when man became an apostate and a sinner, when the creature chose to depart from the Creator, he then found that the world without God was the shadow without the substance, and became filled with disappointment and vexation of spirit. To guilty, fallen man, God has been pleased to give the blessing of His Word; and by that Word He proposes to lead them back again to Himself, and thus restore them to that satisfaction and enjoyment which they cannot derive from any other source.

When the Word of God is rightly used, it always brings the richest consolation. "I will never forget Thy precepts," exclaims the Psalmist; "for with them Thou hast quickened me." As if he had said,—"I was in the condition of a perishing traveller, exhausted

with thirst and fatigue, and at the point of death. But as Hagar found a well in the wilderness, so I found Thy precepts; and having drunk at that life-giving fountain, I am revived, invigorated, and joyful; and ready again to pursue my journey." Although, by following the pillar of fire, the Israelites were led into the midst of a wilderness, even there they found an abundance of comfort. Do you tell us the world has proved a barren waste to you, in which you have found no manna from heaven, no stream of water from the smitten rock, none of the delightful proofs of the presence and blessing of God? Probably the reason has been that you have not pursued the proper route. You have moved on: but the cloud has not gone before you; no pillar of fire has marked out your path. The Bible has been neglected or forgotten. Instead of allowing God to guide you by His counsel, you have followed the varying planet of human reason, or have run after the dancing meteor of public opinion; and they have led you far from happiness and from God. These have drawn you from the fountain of living waters, and conducted you into the land of cisterns: but they are broken cisterns, and can hold no water. There is a voice behind you which says. "This is the way: walk ve in it." From this hour take the Bible for your guide; follow the blazing light of revealed truth; and in a very little time your complaints about the emptiness of the world will be heard no more.

Another matter of frequent complaint is the gloom that rests upon all that is future. Some of us have travelled until we can now see but very little indeed before us; and that little awakens feelings only of a melancholy kind. At our entrance on the journey of life, the prospect appeared clear and boundless and beautiful, beyond expression. One eminence seemed to rise beyond and above another, full of trees and flowers and birds and beasts, and the fruits and glories of paradise itself. We then were eager to advance,

and ready to run ourselves out of breath, in order that we might attain the heights and possess the situations which presented themselves before us. It is now long since some of us reached the greatest elevation we are likely to attain on earth. We have already been as high as worldly views and principles can raise us. Since then, we have been going down the hill. of us have gone down so far that our prospect has become very limited and gloomy indeed. We can see nothing but a few leafless trees, fading flowers, and tottering walls; and the narrow house appointed for all living. In order to obtain a little comfort, we are obliged to look at the past, to think of the past, to talk of the past: for if we look forward, we can see nothing but the growing infirmities of age, and the grave which yawns at our feet. This is indeed a melancholy close of the long and wearisome journey of Merely human principles and pursuits can have no other result.

But if we take the Bible for our guide, and follow the flaming pillar of revealed truth, it will finally place us in a very different situation. It may, indeed, for a time lead us through a deep valley, and along a narrow path; but in the end it will bring us to the top of a loftier mountain than Nebo,—it will place us on an eminence higher than Pisgah. That was the favoured spot from which Moses was permitted to see the promised land. He surveyed it in its length and breadth, and marked its fertility and beauty; but was told that he must not go over and possess it. The Gospel will shew us a far better country than that: the pure abode of angels and God; a land where war and strife are unknown, where tears are wiped away, and which we shall shortly visit and possess for ever. True, it does not tell us when we are to go there, nor exactly how we are to go. At present, Jordan rolls between us and that better land; and how we are to get over, the Bible does not say. But it tells us that

a number which no man can number have got over. All we have to do is to go forward, in obedience to the Divine command, and God will prepare a way before us. We too shall pass safely over; and sing of salvation for ever and ever.

VIII.

The Christian Conscience.

Conscience is that master faculty in our nature which some have termed "the moral sense," and which the apostle Paul calls "judgment" (Phil. i. 9). It is by this that we distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong. By this we try things that differ, approve those that are excellent, and reject those of a contrary character.

The Gospel restores the human conscience to a sound and efficient state. It does this by the abundance and

glory of its revelations.

The vast and important additions which Christianity makes to the knowledge of man is strikingly exemplified in the history and experience of St. Paul. had received the best education which his age and country could afford. He was instructed in the human philosophy of the Gentiles, and in the sacred learning of the Jews; and that by the most competent masters who could be obtained. Such was the energy of his character, and the grasp of his intellect, that he made the very best use of these advantages; and his mind became trained and accomplished in an eminent degree. Yet, even to such a mind as this, did the Gospel open a completely new moral world. When met by Christ on the road to Damascus, he was surprized by the discovery of facts and principles to him perfectly new, and yet glorious and important, beyond all utterance and conception. For the first time, he saw that there had been an incarnation of Deity in the person of Christ, and an atonement made for sin by His death; and he perceived the bearing of these splendid facts upon the character of God, and upon the condition of man. This great discovery threw all his former attainments into the shade. These new views effected a revolution in his character, gave a new direction to the energies of his mighty mind, and led him to live and act in a totally different manner. From that hour, to know Christ himself, and to make Him known to others, became the one end and business of his life.

All the knowledge which the Gospel imparts to us is directly practical in its tendency. It is essentially a rule of duty. By it we are taught what to do, and what to leave undone. This is a rule of duty far superior to that which was found among the heathen. It is far more clear and perfect than that which was enjoyed by the Jews themselves. The darkness of heathenism, and the twilight of Judaism, have been followed by the light of an evangelical day. With such a light as this, it is expected that we shall distinguish between things that differ, however much they may be alike; that we shall not confound good and evil, right and wrong, as many who have gone before us have done.

The Gospel corrects the disorders of the human conscience not only by the knowledge it imparts, but also by the feelings it awakens, and the habits it forms. When St. Paul prays that the love of the Philippians might "abound yet more and more," it is plain that the feeling of love had been already awakened in their hearts. This had been done by the bestowment of blessings; for Christian love is essentially a principle of gratitude, and is produced by benefits received. The blessing of pardon tends more than any other to produce this feeling, being of such magnitude in itself, and the fruit of the atoning death of Christ. Nor is this all. By bestowing blessing upon blessing, God will add fuel to the flame of our love, and thereby

cause it to burn and blaze out with an intensity and a

glory it is impossible to describe.

When the light of God shines upon a man's path. and the love of God glows in his heart, he will be disposed to make a right use of the rule of duty that has been put into his hands. It will become the habit of his mind to place his thoughts and words and works in the light of God's Word. Whatever he is about to do, his first question will be concerning its moral character:—not, Is it profitable, or honourable? but, Is it right, or wrong? Will it please God, or displease Him? Such a habit cannot fail to have the most salutary effect upon the conscience itself. It will be strengthened by exercise. Constant use will constantly render it more acute and powerful. Just as the eve of a seaman, trained by long and daily practice, can discern things in the distance, which, to a mere landsman, are altogether invisible,—and as the ear and the touch of blind people are rendered more delicate and perfect by constant employment.—so the daily habits of a true Christian render him more and more acute in detecting sin under all the forms it is capable of assuming. Such a mind puts all things to the proof. It separates between right and wrong, as fire separates between the silver and the dross. Nay, such persons not only discern between good and evil, but distinguish the different degrees of excellence which belong to things that are all good. While they reject the evil, and choose the good, they especially pursue those things which are the best in themselves, and the most acceptable to God.

The fruit of all such mental habits and Christian training will appear in the outward behaviour. Furnished with a perfect rule of duty, endued with a disposition to use it, and with a constantly increasing ability to use it aright, it may reasonably be expected that the practical result will be that—mainly and substantially, at least,—we shall be "sincere and without

offence" till the day of Christ.

Great things have been done for you, Christians; and great things are expected from you. You are builders, furnished by your Master with the rule and plummet, and all other necessary means, for the purpose of testing your work. You love your Master, and desire to please Him by doing your work aright; and that will lead you to apply the rule to your workmanship as you proceed. Being thus prepared, is it not reasonable to expect that, though you build for eternity, you will make no capital mistake; but that, at the last, when the Lord God shall stand upon your work with the plummet in His hands, He will find it all square and right and true?

You are mariners, engaged in performing the voyage of life; but you are furnished with chart and compass, and every thing that is necessary to enable you to shape your course aright. If you love your Master, and desire to secure His favour, you will not neglect these instruments, but use them continually; and the more they are used, the more able you will be to use them aright. What then may be expected, as the probable practical result? May we not reasonably hope that you will neither fall upon the rocks on the right hand, nor the shallows on the left; but that you will direct your way through them all with unerring certainty? Surely you will not find yourselves many leagues wide of the port at last. You will hit it exactly; and have "an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

IX.

Submission and Safety.

An attention to the Word of God is very profitable to all those who feel their need of the Divine protection. For the Bible has all the authority of law. It

is the declared will of the great Governor of the world. But the authority of law is always connected with the protection of law. The right to command involves an obligation to defend. Submission and allegiance to government give us a right to the security it was designed to afford. Every sinner is an outlaw. Having renounced the Divine authority, he has placed himself without the pale of the Divine protection. Now that he has resolved to be his own master, he must also be his own keeper. The poor creature is exposed to all the perils of this life, and is about to pass out of time into eternity; but he is entitled to no succour from above.

As God has commanded us to keep His precepts diligently, so He is well able to afford us the most ample security. Submit to His rule, and you immediately place yourselves under His special protection. Study His Word, resign yourself to its guidance, and you will soon feel that the Eternal God is your refuge, and underneath you are the everlasting arms. When you have so learned His judgments as to embrace and submit to them, you will find yourself placed in the most elevated and happy condition: for there are no people so happy as those who are the objects of the special care of our Father which is in heaven. "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

PART THIRD.

T.

"Whatsaever He saith unto you, do it." John ii. 5.

IF Jesus Christ is with us at all, it must be in the character of Master. If we would have the comfort and blessedness connected with His favour and presence, we must feel that we are His servants, and act accordingly. He is, indeed, our Brother and our Friend; but still He is our Ruler and our King; and although His kindness and condescension are unbounded. He will tolerate nothing which is inconsistent with the profoundest reverence, and the most entire We must acquiesce in all His arrangeobedience. ments, both of Providence and grace. contrary to this will be allowed, even in His most intimate, and beloved, and highly favoured friends. The reason of this is, His plans are perfect: they are all laid in absolute wisdom, and therefore cannot be improved. If we would have His presence, and blessing, and smile, there must be nothing in us, or about us, which implies a doubt of His wisdom, or of His goodness: nothing which indicates a conceit that we could order better for ourselves than He orders for us. We must learn to say, "He hath done all things well." Saviour, "not my will, but Thine be done!"

But if we would secure the presence and blessing of Jesus we must also render an active submission to His will. His mother knew that if, on this occasion,

the people of Cana would have the full benefit of His presence, they must observe His directions. Hence she charged them, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." This advice is always seasonable and necessary. If He calls you to come out from among the wicked, and be separate—do it. If He requires you to "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup,"—do it. If He charges you not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together,—do it. If He commands you to be holy in your general conduct in the world,—do it. While you do His will, you make sure of His presence; you bind Him to the fulfilment of His promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Teach them, said the Saviour, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

II.

The Protection of Christ.

"But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"
—Matt. viii. 27.

These words were spoken by the disciples of Christ, and express the impression made upon their minds by some very extraordinary circumstances. They had been overtaken by a storm on the Sea of Galilee, had felt themselves in great danger, and had seen the winds and the waves hushed by the word of their Master. If we turn our thoughts from them to ourselves, to our own circumstances, and the solemn prospects opening before us, their words suggest some very useful considerations.

Each one of us has his own personal history, made up of a great variety of events, happening in immediate connection with himself, and influencing his character, and tending to fix his present and eternal condition. These events of our lives bear a character of necessity, of variety, and of solemnity. Some of them are indeed subject to the decisions of the will; but others are altogether beyond our control. Whether we are to live or not, where and when we are to be born, and what is to be our condition in the world, are matters which are determined for us. Nor are we consulted as to whether or not we shall sicken and die. A power which we are unable to resist has decreed that dust we are and unto dust shall we return; and that, after death, we shall be treated according to our moral character, and whatsoever we "sow," that shall we also "reap." These are things which cannot be avoided, and which come upon us all.

There is also a great variety in those events which constitute the history of a human being. Men differ from each other, and time causes every man to differ from his former self. Death is a mighty change: we experience a wonderful revolution in passing from the embodied to the disembodied state. Yet this perpetual change and endless variety do not deprive the events of life of a character of the deepest solemnity. Our course on earth is a continual progress to eternity. The water which issues from the fountain, forming the head of some mighty river, no sooner begins to flow than it is on its way to the sea. It may have hundreds of miles to travel through, and varied districts of country to pass, and may be subject to many turnings and windings in its course; but it will reach the ocean, and be lost in its length and breadth. Every event in life is a step in advance towards the great end of all earthly things.

Even what is agreeable and joyous, by this circumstance, becomes invested with solemnity, and awakens the most serious thoughts and feelings.

"Whate'er we do, where'er we be, We're travelling to the grave." Whether rejoicing, or weeping; attending a marriage, or a funeral; abounding in wealth, or pining in poverty; we are constantly advancing nearer to that tribunal where "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing." Such circumstances as these give a character of grandeur and solemnity to our condition, which often causes the stout-hearted to tremble, and compels the devout to fall upon their knees, and cry to God to prepare them to finish their course with

joy, and to stand before the Son of man.

But "what manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" These words of the disciples suggest that Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, is able to control all the events of human life, and conduct them to a safe and happy conclusion. None, however, can do this but the Lord Jesus Christ; for "neither is there salvation in any other." When the disciples became alarmed, and awoke their Master, they were reproved because they had overlooked His grace and presence, and not because they had false or exaggerated views of their danger. Most likely, had not Jesus arisen, and turned the storm into a calm, the boat would have foundered, and they would have Every man is a sinner, and unless he is been lost. taken under the protection of Christ, he must perish. Health and prosperity will only tend to intoxicate his spirit, and complete his ruin; trouble and calamity will harden his heart, and plunge him into that sorrow of the world which worketh death. But the pardoned sinner is placed under a gracious and almighty protec-Jesus tells us that the Father has given Him power over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to His believing people. Jesus is more to His people than is a skilful captain to his ship; "for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey However high the winds may blow, and the billows rise, He takes advantage of every blast, of every current, and of every wave; and while the raging sea. threatens to swallow them up, it urges them onward in a right direction, and brings them in safety to the haven where they would be.

In order that we may thus enjoy the protection of Christ, there must be on our part an act of personal surrender and submission to His control. bring us under the operation of His power, and give us to see His great salvation. The disciples were simply called to follow Christ: and by an act of their own, "they left all, and followed Him." They followed Him in the sense of imitating His conduct, while they obeyed His commands. On this occasion, Jesus first entered the ship, and the disciples followed Him, and became the companions of His voyage. Ever afterwards, they felt that He had left them an example, and that by efforts of their own they were bound to tread in His steps. At the same time, Jesus assured them that He was always with them, that they should survive their troubles, and, finally, share in His glory. From the hour when Paul made his memorable surrender to Christ, it became the one business of his life to finish the work given him to do. Nor was he unmindful of his Master, considered as his example; for it was his constant aim to be conformed to the Son of That he felt himself to be under the Saviour's protection, and all the events of his life under His Divine control, is evident from the language he employed on all occasions, from the commencement to the close of his Christian pilgrimage.

Many persons fully purpose to become the disciples of Christ, but think there are certain other matters which first demand their attention. Some change must be made, some work done, or some difficulty removed,—something or other must be attended to, in the first place,—and afterwards, they will bow to Christ, and seek His salvation. To the man who, before becoming a disciple, requested permission to go and bury his father, Jesus said, "Follow me, and let the dead

bury their dead." He was first of all to place himself at the disposal of Christ; and leave the funeral of his father to the care of his Master. He would see that the remains were decently interred, either by his son, or by the hands of other people. You may be full of good purposes; but you are never likely to be saved until you not only seek the kingdom of God, but seek it "first," and begin to attend to your salvation before every other business, however urgent,—every pleasure, however rich,—and every advantage, however great. Whenever you prefer your salvation to all other things, fall at the feet of Jesus, and submit to be saved now, vou will be at once taken under His protection. will begin to work in you, and for you; and whatever may befal you in future, you shall proceed from glory to glory,

"Till in heaven you take your place;
Till you cast your crown before Him,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise."

III.

Separation from the World.

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord."—2 Cor. vi. 17.

This precept marks out the conduct which ought to be pursued by the genuine disciples of Christ towards those who are actuated by an opposite spirit, and live in an opposite manner. It is lawful, because unavoidable, to mix with such people, in order to the performance of the duties of life. To take leave of society, and retire into a desert, is utterly contrary to the designs of Christianity. We are to stay among our fellow-men; to bear all our burdens, and perform all our duties, as members of civil society; even though our souls, like that of righteous Lot, should be vexed from day to day, in witnessing their unlawful deeds.

Our blessed Saviour came to be called the "Friend of publicans and sinners," on account of His mixing so frequently and conversing so freely with them; and since He left us an example, that we should follow His steps, our separation from the world is not to be like that of the Jewish Pharisees, which originated in pride, and led to conduct at once hateful and criminal. Instead of endeavouring, by repeated acts of kindness, to bring back these wanderers to the paths of rectitude and peace, they said to them, with haughty contempt, "Stand by: for we are holier than you." This language hardened the persons to whom it was addressed, and brought down the Divine displeasure upon the men who employed it (Isa. lxv. 5). We are not to treat the most ignorant and abandoned of our species with such supercilious neglect as this. We must entertain towards them "bowels of mercies;" we must be unwearied in our attempts to do them good; we must mingle with them, as our Redeemer did; but still we must take care that we are actuated by the same motives of charity, and that our intercourse with them is directed to the same benevolent purpose, and carried on in the same pure and heavenly manner. The great question for us to consider is, how far our conduct is likely to lead to their conversion.

David says, "I will not know a wicked person; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight." He would not, when it could be avoided, admit a wicked person into his family, or suffer one to remain there, when his true character was discovered. And if wicked persons are not to be admitted into our families, even as servants, neither are they to be admitted under a more intimate and endearing relation. Not, for instance, as partners in business, nor in the character of husband or wife. These are not the dreams of an enthusiast; they are not merely the Rules of our Society; they are the

decisions of the Bible, and he that despiseth them, "despiseth not man, but God." It is true these maxims have been despised; but the results show how awful it is to trifle with the Divine commands. many children have been corrupted through the conversation of wicked servants. How many Methodists have become useless in their lives, and worldly in their spirit, have withdrawn from the Society, and fallen into open sin, in consequence of having entered into partnerships. contracted marriages, or formed other intimate relationships with ungodly persons. Sometimes even good men are prone to think these directions too rigid Many ungodly persons are so agreeable and severe. that we think it impossible their nature can be so deprayed, and their company so dangerous as the Bible represents. But the heart of man is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," and none can know it but that God with whom we have to do. show His wisdom when He tells His saints that worldly and wicked people are not fit companions for them.

"Make no friendship," says Solomon, "with an angry man: and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy It is expedient, perhaps necessary, that you should have a friend, some individual whose person you esteem, whose character you respect, in whose kindness and integrity you can confide, and with whom you can more freely and frequently converse; but you must take care that that friend is not the slave of folly and No matter how amiable in person or manners an individual may be, how distinguished for wisdom and learning, nor how eminent in rank and wealth; all these advantages, when associated with a depraved heart, are only instruments of mischief. Should you voluntarily form habits of intimacy with such a person, his society will operate upon you like some potent spell, and in spite of your better intentions and resolutions, you will "learn his ways, and get a snare to your goul."

At the same time it must be admitted that religious people are often under numerous and powerful temptations to contract these perilous friendships; hence the Psalmist has congratulated the man who has kept himself separate from such society. "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." If he has escaped the corruption that is in the world; if he has gone in and out among worldly and wicked men, and resisted all the blandishments of their conversation and example, and continued to walk with God; if he has had "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," but rather, by his whole spirit and behaviour, reproved them;—then is he a "blessed" man. He is a favourite of the skies; he has experienced a prodigious deliverance, and his prospects are glorious beyond expression. As he has successfully resisted the temptations of life, he shall be kept amid its sorrows and vicissitudes. That hand which has preserved him from sin will sustain him in death, bear him through the billows of Jordan, and land him on the shores of heaven.

Indeed, David, in some of his pleadings with God, urges his continued separation from wicked men as a proof of the genuineness and vigour of his piety; and from thence infers his claim to the Divine protection and care. "I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers;" and therefore, "gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men." And, be assured, if we intend to live in a state of separation from the world, our religion must be something more than a name. We must possess, not merely the form, but the power of godliness; that vital religion which flows from union with Christ; which enables us to be joyful in tribulation, and to triumph over death, and which ensures to us the Divine favour and protection here and hereafter.

"And I will receive you, and will be a Father unto

you." Whatever reasons any of us may imagine there are for our continuing this unholy friendship, they are all answered in these words. Are you saying, "I must mix with sinners, and join in their conversation, or they will despise and hate me?" But God says. "If they reject, I will receive you;" and surely His favour is an equivalent for the loss of theirs. sav. "But wicked men are my best customers." depend upon them for my daily bread, and I must mingle with them, though their company is highly injurious to the interests of my soul?" But God has said, "I will be a Father unto you;" and surely your Father in heaven is as able to supply your temporal wants as all the wicked men in the world. say, "But I must associate with such and such wicked men; they are so agreeable, so intelligent, and so wellinformed?" But there must be higher delight in fellowship with God; and you cannot have fellowship with God and fellowship with sinners.

There never was a grosser delusion than that of supposing we are to be ruined, or even seriously injured, by keeping the commandments of God. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate."

IV.

Christian Self-denial.

This does not consist in bodily austerities, nor in solemn looks and words, nor in a very plain dress, nor in long and frequent fastings, nor in the various modes of self-torment which are practised in the Romish church. It must be something very different, because in such austerities Christians have often been far outdone by heathens; while it is undeniable that some persons who have gone a great length in these courses have been amongst the worst men that ever disgraced the Christian name. Christian self-denial is on amongst the worst men that ever disgraced the Christian name.

bending adherence to the will of God. It is the triumph of religious principle over worldly passion and interest; an assertion of the rights of conscience and of God, by subjecting every thing to their just authority. This sort of self-denial is the true spring and principle of virtue and religion, and we see it exemplified in the conduct of St. Paul.

When the Saviour appeared to him on his way to Damascus, and called him to be an apostle, he was then fully convinced that Jesus was the Christ, and felt it an imperative duty to make Him known to But while this course was perfectly right, it was opposed to his feelings, and to his worldly interests. To acknowledge that Jesus was the Christ was to confess himself to have been deeply in the wrong. was highly esteemed and honoured by his countrymen, and had a fair prospect of rising still higher in credit and in fame; but if he confessed Christ, he must exchange honour for disgrace, the praises of men for their reproaches and contempt. He possessed a powerful and highly-cultivated mind, and had he devoted himself to the acquisition of wealth, he could scarcely have failed to become eminently rich; but if he consented to be an apostle he must employ his mighty talents, not for his own emolument, but in the service of the Galilean King. But this matchless man denied himself, and followed his Saviour. When his feelings and worldly interests became opposed to his duty, he counted them" but dung," and threw them all away. He determined, at all hazards, to hearken to the voice of truth, of conscience, and of God.

The same principle runs through the life of every true Christian, and determines his character and conduct in the various circumstances in which he may be placed.

For instance, it is a Divine command, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day;" but many a good man has found himself so circumstanced as to

have a prospect of considerable gain, in case he would consent to violate this command; while, if he resolve to keep it, himself and family must, apparently, be reduced to want. Now although trimmers and worldlings will tell him that God is merciful, and that he may venture, in this instance, to trifle with His law. if he is a man of faith, he will put all his earthly advantages to hazard, and resolve to abide by the commands of his God. Again, our religion enjoins upon us to "speak every man truth with his neighbour:" but a pious man sometimes finds that he might gain many a shilling and many a pound, if he would submit to tell a lie, or to impose upon others by concealing a part of the truth, or in other respects to act in a mean and dishonourable way. He is told that if he will be so scrupulous and old-fashioned as to say nothing but the truth, he will remain but a poor and a common Although as a man he may desire these worldly advantages, yet as a good man he will abhor a lie, as the offspring of hell; and will therefore relinquish every advantage, and submit to every inconvenience, that he may keep "a conscience void of offence."

Again, we are directed by an inspired apostle not to be "conformed to this world;" yet a true Christian will sometimes find that to mingle with the men of the world, to speak their language, to imitate their manners, and to adopt their customs, will gain their esteem, and thereby promote his own credit and worldly advantage. But although a Christian has an affectionate heart, which delights in acts of kindness. and disposes him to be the friend of all mankind, and although many will tell him that religion does not consist in little singularities, nor in an unsocial behaviour; yet when he hears his Saviour say to His followers, "Ye are the light of the world: ye are the salt of the earth," he finds it necessary to do violence to his feelings, to keep up the line of distinction between the church and the world, and to be separate and singular,

in a variety of respects.

Self-denial is the triumph of principle; an inflexible adherence to the Divine commands; a resolute trampling upon our feelings and worldly interests, when they interfere with the authority of God, and with the obedience we owe to Him. It is called into exercise at every stage of the Christian life; and is the source of universal holiness, the parent of every good word and work.

There is nothing more dignified or noble in character, nothing more acceptable to God than true Christian self-denial. It is respectable, even when associated with errors and mistakes. When a man will sacrifice his wealth to his convictions, and forego his pleasures for the sake of his conscience,—even though he may be in other respects a weak man, and may be under some mistakes as to the nature of his duty,—yet there is a real sublimity in his character; and the apostle has taught us to regard that man with special veneration, and assures us that, notwithstanding his infirmities, God has accepted him, and regards him with peculiar delight.

What can be more noble and sublime than the conduct of Moses, who gave up the pleasures and honours of a court, and the prospect of a crown, to obey his conscience, and to please his God? The same dignified spirit has been evinced by many other saints, though exhibited on a more humble and contracted scale. apostles left their fishing tackle and their boats, but they left their all to follow Jesus. The poor widow cast in only two mites; but she expended "all" her substance, from a principle of love to God. the spirit of Moses; and had these people been in possession of titles, and pleasures, and wealth, the same principle would have led them to sacrifice their all in obedience to the command of Christ. And those tradesmen who give up the profits of their business on the Lord's Day, because it is contrary to a Divine command,—those who choose to be poor rather than to sin,

—those Christian women who lay aside ornaments because they deem it wrong to wear them,—are actuated by the spirit of confessors and martyrs, a spirit which commands the admiration of all reasonable beings, and will be applauded by God Himself before an assembled world.

V.

Philosophy and Revelation.

God is the source of all true knowledge, and if we wish to become enlightened and intelligent, we must sit at His feet, and listen to His words. At the present day we hear a great deal said on the importance of knowledge. Some people think we are on the eve of a new state of things. Extraordinary efforts are made for the purpose of enlightening the masses. Man has become the study of man; and every man now seems determined thoroughly to understand the nature, necessities, and circumstances of himself and his fellowcreatures. From a great deal of our popular literature, however, the subject of religion is carefully and intentionally excluded. Every branch of philosophy is cultivated with great assiduity; but revelation is overlooked and neglected. All that man can discover is repeated in a thousand different forms; but the things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, are treated with silent contempt. Yet this is supposed to be the proper way to train up an enlightened community.

But the truth is, that although we talk a great deal about the intellectual, the physical, and the social necessities of man, these things are thoroughly understood only by our great and adorable Creator. He made us, and therefore He knows what is in us, what are our wants, and how those wants are to be supplied. To those who are employed in studying the nature of

man, mere reason and philosophy can give but little All the light it supplies, even when cultiassistance. vated with the greatest success, is only that of a lamp. It shows human nature under one or two particular aspects: but still leaves it, mainly and substantially. an undiscovered subject. It may enlighten a single room, or a particular street; but leaves the world, in its length and breadth, as dark as it was before. But Jesus has said, "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." After all that can be done by lamps, in order that the earth may be enlightened it must turn upon its axis towards the sun, until his beams have changed the night into day. Whoever would have the light of life must turn to the Sun of Righteousness. He must come to the Bible, and place himself in the broad light of evangelical day. When this is the case, he will not be left to guess and to blunder, as men do when they live in the dark. Those who come to God for instruction, and submit to be taught by Him, are made the "children of light, and of the day." They not merely gain a smattering of knowledge, which just serves to fill them with vanity and self-conceit; but they understand themselves, and their God, and their business, and the people with whom they have to do; and are enabled to conduct themselves wisely and properly in that situation in which the Providence of God has placed them.

VI.

On Walking Circumspectly.

"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."—Eph. v. 15.

When a man is destroyed or injured by a strength which he cannot resist, he is pitied by others, and attaches no blame to himself; but when this is the

consequence of mere levity and inconsideration, when a little thought and attention might have saved him, he is despised by his neighbours, and stung with self-reproach. That we may not feel in this way at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, the apostle here exhorts us to "walk circumspectly," to look at every thing, to look at it in the light of the Bible, that we may see its true character, and know how to act respecting it.

There are many things in this world which bear directly upon the state and character of religious people, and therefore demand their special attention.

A few only of these we can mention here.

1. Look at your tempter. Look at him in the light which heaven in mercy has thrown upon his character and his works. You are aware that there is an influence put forth by some spiritual and invisible agent for the purpose of enticing men to sin. Although you never saw the shape of that being, you have felt his workings in your heart. But the interest which this evil spirit feels in the ruin of individuals, the observations he makes on them, the accuracy and extent of his knowledge of their character and circumstances, are far greater than is generally supposed: for we are told (Job i. 7, 8) that "the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." The Divine Being knew that the sole object of these wanderings through the world was to study the character, and to mark the circumstances of its inhabitants. He accordingly demanded of him, "Hast thou considered my servant Satan immediately proceeds to give such an account of that wonderful man as rendered it abundantly evident that he had observed him with the closest attention.

The Bible abounds with cautions and warnings against the snares and suggestions of this evil spirit;

and from these admonitions we learn that there is no error or wickedness which he will not make the matter of a temptation,-no circumstance that can befal us which he will not endeavour to make an occasion of He tries to pollute the secret thoughts and workings of the mind. He sometimes seeks, by a concurrence of circumstances, almost to force pious people to speak unadvisedly with their lips. In this he prevailed. not only with Peter, whose temper was somewhat warm and rash, but also with Moses, who was the meekest Through his influence, many persons, in all ages and countries, have been led to substitute ceremonies for the duties of morality; and to persuade themselves that if they do but observe that law which is positive, and therefore temporary, they may venture to violate that which is moral, and therefore eternal in its obligations. Prosperity, in his hands, is pregnant with danger; and adversity he will, if possible, render the occasion of our ruin. Even the necessary attention we are obliged to give to the things of the world is often made a snare to our souls. What could be more proper than for Martha to entertain her Saviour, and provide for His temporal wants? Yet the enemy, stepping in on that memorable occasion. was on the point of drawing her aside. For she was "careful and troubled about many things," and became inattentive to the words of eternal life. See, then, that you "walk circumspectly," in respect of this great enemy. Look at his character and designs in the light of God; otherwise he will make a fool of you, as he has done of thousands more.

2. "Take heed," says our Saviour, "and beware of men." All those persons who intend to save their souls alive must pay considerable attention to the people by whom they are surrounded. This world has always contained a great many pretenders, men calling themselves philosophers, and giving themselves credit for a wonderful degree of wisdom. They have not

only gone far beyond the generality of mankind in intellectual attainments, but have assumed themselves to be wiser than the Holy Ghost; for, instead of sitting at the feet of prophets and apostles, and submitting to be taught by men who had themselves been taught by God, they have rejected the authority of the Bible, and professed to find out a better method of religion and morality than that which it contains. There are many of these vain men in the world at the present day, who imagine that they are born to enlighten and guide others, and who are seeking, in various ways, to turn away attention from Christ and His apostles, in order to fix it upon themselves. Multitudes of people are disposed to listen to these merely human and incompetent guides; and you will probably be led to do the same, unless you "walk circumspectly," and avail yourselves of the light of the Gospel of Christ.

"Put not your trust in princes, neither in the son of man, in whom there is no help." However great and lofty a man's spirit may be, if he choose to separate himself from God, he shall perish in his own helplessness; and all who depend upon him, to the neglect of God, shall perish together with him. Where are all the doctrines and followers of Simon Magus now? They are all passed away as a dream. Yet he was a very great and wonderful man in his day, "to whom they all gave heed, from the least unto the greatest, saying. This man is the great power of God." What is the difference between the sorceries by which he bewitched the people of Samaria, and the speculations and discoveries by which so many people are bewitched at this day? They are all the mere reasonings and conclusions of acute and clever men; but they neither came from God, nor can they lead to Him. They can neither make the sinful holy, nor the miserable happy. Simon himself was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the boad of iniquity;" and it is not likely that the condition of his followers was better than his own. Whatever progress a man may make in literature and philosophy. it is true now, and will be as long as the world stands, that, beside Christ, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." You may study the principles and admire the character of the philosophers and politicians of this world: but if you stay away from Christ, you will be left "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." The poor afflicted woman who had spent all her time and property in applying to one physician after another, was to be pitied, so long as she knew only of such as these; but after she became acquainted with Christ. she must have been blamed by others, and blamed by herself, had she continued to attend to them, and neglected Him. Then "see that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Look at the character of Christ, and at the pretensions of those who would allure you away from Him; and then you will say with the disciples, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

3. It is also necessary for us to look attentively at those warnings and intimations of spiritual danger obtruded upon our notice from different quarters. Many are heard to say, "I am well able to take care of myself. I will never submit to this endless intermeddling with my character and concerns." But this is the language of passionate and inconsiderate people. Your duty, in reference to such intimations is, not to throw them back with contempt, but to look at them; and to ascertain, as far as possible, whether or not they come from God. If they have nothing to do with Him, but are mere human impertinencies, they, of course, are beneath the attention of a wise man; but if they come from God, they may be of as much importance to you as were the messages of Elisha to the king of Israel during the war he was waging with Syria. The man of God sent unto the king, sent

without being asked, and obtruded his warning voice upon the royal ear. Now, his Majesty might have said. "Who is the man who presumes to give advice to me? Are not I and my councillors competent to manage the affairs of the kingdom?" Yet if he had spoken and acted in this manner, he would have proved himself a fool; for his army would have been cut to pieces, his enemies would then have visited his capital. and, most probably, deprived him of his crown. But the king acted "circumspectly." He looked at the message: he endeavoured, as well as he was able, to ascertain its truth and correctness; he saw that it came from God: he regulated his military movements according to the intimations he had received, and thereby saved himself and his army, not once or twice only, but again and again. If you choose to slight the warning voice of God, you will be circumvented and destroyed. If you are circumspect and attentive, you will be directed and saved.

VII.

"Lead us not into Temptation."

Matt. vi. 13.

THE pardon of sin is to be followed by a holy life. It is only on this principle that we can reconcile the statements of St. Paul and St. James on the subject of a sinner's justification before God. St. Paul says that a man is justified by faith "without works;" and St. James affirms that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The one apostle speaks of the works which go before justification; the other of the works which follow after. St. Paul tells us that though a man has been a mere sinner, and done absolutely no works that are good; yet if he believes in

the Lord Jesus Christ, he will be justified, or pardoned, on the ground of the Redeemer's death. By way of supplement to all this, St. James comes forward, and tells us that although pardon may be obtained in this way, it cannot be retained on exactly the same principle. In other words, pardon must be followed by obedience, or the blessing will be lost.

But we are sure to be powerfully tempted to sin. According to the Bible, that evil spirit who is called the Devil, and Satan, "deceiveth the whole world." That, at least, is the vast project which he has conceived in his mind, and which he unceasingly labours to effect. None are so mean as to be beneath his notice, or so high as to be out of his reach; nor are any so established in goodness as to induce him in despair to pass them by. If ever there was a case which must have appeared utterly hopeless, it was that of the Lord Jesus Christ. In His nature it was impossible to find the smallest seed of evil which could, by any management, be matured into an actual Jesus had a wisdom which penetrated through all the disguises of the tempter. About His person there was a majesty and glory which caused even the devils to tremble. But there are no bounds to Satan's malignity and pride; and he actually became the tempter of the Lord Jesus Christ. While the Redeemer was in the wilderness, and alone, weary with long wakefulness and fasting, the enemy made his approach. All his suggestions were skilfully adapted to the circumstances of the Saviour, and were at once plausible, subtle, and persevering. But the tempter was met at every point; and at length, baffled and defeated, he was compelled to depart.

If the malice of Satan led him to bestow so much pains on a case so utterly unpromising, how much more certainly will he come to all other human beings, when he sees in them so many things to give him the hope of success. His steadfast purpose is to complete

in each the ruin he has already begun. No art will be left untried, no pains will be spared. All your movements will be watched. He will hover about your path, join you at every convenient opportunity, and never cease his attempts to deceive and destroy; till you are brought down to his own hell, or make your escape to that celestial city into which he cannot come.

To be led into temptation, to fall into temptation, and to enter into temptation, are all expressions used in the sacred writings, and seem to denote the actual commission of sin. It is not supposed, in this petition of the Lord's prayer, that the blessed God ever does or can lead men to commit sin. The expression is an idiom of speech, which represents God as doing that which He suffers to be done, or does not interfere for the purpose of preventing. That we may not thus be left to listen to the tempter, and to sin, we are here directed to have recourse to prayer. This fearful calamity may be averted by prayer. In all cases, "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

Every human being, therefore, who rightly understands his own circumstances, must feel himself to be in a condition involving the most serious responsibility. His position is solemn and tremendous, like that of Hezekiah, when he received a letter from Sennacherib, informing him that Judea was about to be invaded, and Jerusalem besieged, by an Assyrian army, and,—as he had no troops able to resist such an overwhelming force,—advising him at once to surrender. reception of this message that pious king awoke to all the solemnity of his situation. It was undoubtedly true that the Assyrian army had laid waste all the surrounding countries, that he was unable to resist it, and that, if attacked, he must be subdued and destroyed. Resistance seemed to be in vain, nay, to be folly and madness; as it could only tend to irritate his powerful foe, and hasten his own destruction. On the other hand, he was the sovereign of the country, the natural protector of his people. His subjects had placed their property, their families, their lives, their all, in his hands; and should he betray his trust, yield to his terrors, and subject these millions of helpless people to all the horrors of captivity, without doing all that man could do to save them, it would be to convict himself of the profoundest baseness, and to cause his memory to be execrated through all succeeding generations. What then was to be done in this fearful emergency? The holy man remembered his God, and resolved to apply to Him for help. He accordingly took up Sennacherib's letter, carried it to the temple, and spread it before the Lord. brought him help from heaven; and he and his people saw the salvation of God.

With this sovereign and his trouble every human being will be able to sympathize who properly understands his own situation with reference to spiritual and Consider the depravity of your own eternal things. heart, the abounding wickedness which is in the world, the spirit and conversation of many of the people with whom you mingle from day to day, and the malice, the subtlety, and the activity of Satan. Then remember that, amidst all these inward and outward temptations, you are required to be holy "in all manner of conversation." How is it possible for this to be done, in the midst of such unfavourable circumstances? Is it possible to preserve a lighted candle. exposed to the wind on the top of a mountain? Can a single soldier defend himself against a powerful and well-appointed army? Yet this difficulty must be attempted: this apparent impossibility must be achieved. Remember that you are entrusted with the interests of an immortal soul. The loss of a soul is the betrayal of a trust, and a deed which no considertions can justify.

There is help for you in God. Go to Him. Prayer will prevail. God not only may come to your help, He has bound Himself to do so, in answer to prayer. Pray, therefore, says the apostle, "with all prayer;" and you shall experience a glorious salvation. God will restrain the power of the tempter; He will sanctify your nature; He will favour you with His gracious and abiding presence, as the only means of perfect security; and, in due time, will put an end to all your trials and perils by taking you home to Himself, and will present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

VIII.

Chadient Faith.

" With men this is impossible; but not with God."

THESE words involve a principle of universal application. When we merely reason about the commands of God with reference to our salvation, they appear impracticable; but when we attempt to keep them, in the spirit of obedient faith, those attempts are crowned with success. While we merely consider them, we obtain no Divine assistance; but we are Divinely assisted as soon as ever we attempt to do them. When we only look at them, it is with a merely human eye; when we only reason about them, it is with a merely human reason; but when we endeavour to obey them, we are endued with power "from on high."

We are summoned to a lofty and apparently impracticable enterprize, when we are called to "deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts," and to "walk before God, in holiness and righteousness," all our days. This is to proclaim war against both earth and hell. To undertake this, in the hope of final victory, is, we

are told, to attempt what is impossible, and to set aside the experience of a majority of mankind. God, however, calls upon us to attack all hell single-handed; and to expect to be conquerors, and more than conquerors, "through Him that hath loved us." Had Gideon merely reasoned on the largeness of the enemy's army, and the smallness of his own, and never begun the attack, he might have concluded that victory was impossible. Many a warrior has been defeated in battle because his forces were fewer and feebler than those of his enemy. But, then, remember, God had not directed them to fight. Gideon was commanded to give battle to the Midianites; and hence he was victorious, although their army was twenty times greater than his own. The Lord is with you while you are with Him. You are called, not to calculate the strength of your spiritual enemies, but to fight them,—not to deliberate on the possibility of obtaining holiness; but to cleanse yourselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit." The command of God to you is, "Be ye holy." You are therefore to aim at being holy, to pray to be holy, to strive to be holy. These principles and these practices will bring you into an alliance with omnipotence; -- you will find that the things impossible with men are possible with God, and that His power and grace are triumphantly realized in the happy experience of all His believing and obedient people.

IX.

On Reproof.

"Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil."—Psa. cxli. 5.

THE smiting and reproof here mentioned seems to be a rational and affectionate attempt to make another

sensible of his fault, in order to his repentance and amendment. While it censures, it also proves, by clear and convincing reasons, that what is so censured is a fault which ought to be amended. To assail the faults of another in a supercilious and dogmatical way is reviling, rather than reproof; and is much more likely to harden than to reform. Sometimes censure originates in malignity, and is not meant to benefit the offender, but to expose and mortify him. This is more properly reproach and abuse than reproof, which always springs from ardent and disinterested charity, and is intended, not to punish, but to soften and to save.

Few characters are superior to reproof. Even David, with all his excellencies and achievements, appears to have been conscious of many mistakes and miscarriages: and hence he anticipated reproof, when admitted to the society of the faithful, and declared himself ready to receive it. A good man may be perfect in love, but he will still be defective in knowledge; and mistakes in judgment will produce mistakes in practice. Job and his friends, although persons of great wisdom and piety, were betrayed into such mistakes as brought a severe rebuke from heaven upon them all. Paul tells us that, on one occasion, he withstood Peter to the face. "because he was to be blamed." Shall we then resent reproof, when it is given, as if we had received some grievous injury? If we consider ourselves, our ignorance and weakness. and the dangerous circumstances in which we are placed, we shall rather be surprized that it has not been administered to us oftener, and with greater severity. So far from dreaming that our friends can see nothing amiss in our conduct, we shall wonder at the extent of their charity, which can bear so much and so long, and hide such a multitude of faults.

Such reproof righteous persons are in the habit of giving. Indeed it is impossible to conceive how he can be a righteous man who omits this duty, as it is

one of the prime dictates of nature. For is it not obvious that creatures who have one origin, one nature, and one end, and who are united and rendered mutually dependent, are bound to promote each other's good? The duty of consulting each other's welfare is a necessary result of the very constitution of our rational and social nature.

Nothing can be more clear than that God intends men to seek to preserve each other from those evils to which they are exposed, and to assist each other in attaining that good of which they are capable. Now, of all kinds of good, that which is spiritual and eternal stands pre-eminent. This can only be endangered or lost by sin; so that to preserve or recover another from sin is one of the first duties of the law of nature, a prime effect of that love which we owe to the whole human offspring of our Father which is in heaven.

When God recovers us from the ruins of the fall, and restores us to His favour and image, He re-awakens and invigorates this principle within us. He who possesses that yearning fervent love which the Gospel inspires, cannot be indifferent while he sees his brother endangering his soul. It may be a very painful and difficult task to reprove sin; but love surmounts all obstacles. It makes the dumb to speak. It puts all a man's energies in motion; and constrains him to save his offending brother "with fear, pulling him out of the fire."

David considered such reproof as productive of great good. Let the righteous reprove me, says he, "it shall be an excellent oil;" it will tend to ornament and beautify my soul. Such reproof is an ordinance of God, a Divinely-instituted means of grace, an effort of infinite wisdom and goodness in order to our salvation. God has constituted His holy prophets and apostles the great rebukers of all nations and ages; their writings are for reproof as well as instruction.

Parents are expected to rebuke the vices of their children, and Eli was severely censured for neglecting this great duty. Ministers of the Gospel are commanded to reprove and rebuke "with all authority." Nav. that this necessary duty should not be neglected. God has laid it upon His people generally, charging every man individually to give needful and seasonable reproof to his neighbour and his brother. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." So that the words of the apostle in reference to magistrates may be applied to him who reproves us for sin: "He that resisteth, resisteth the ordinance of God." It is not so much the voice of thy brother on earth as of thy Father which is in heaven. It is not merely the attempt of fraternal affection, but the effort of infinite grace to recover thee from the snare of the devil; and if it be properly received, as it came from God, it will lead to Him, and produce effects worthy of that infinite love whence it proceeded.

There are many affecting examples of the sad consequences which have resulted either when reproof has not been given, or when it has been rejected. God threatens to put an end to the reproofs of His prophets, as the heaviest calamity He could bring upon a rebellious and incorrigible people. Absalom possessed the finest personal qualifications, by which he was eminently fitted to serve his generation, and to acquire immortal honour for himself. But he received caresses instead of reproof; and became, in consequence, the shame and grief of his father, the scourge of his family, the curse of his country, and the author of his untimely destruction. And one principal reason why it is "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" is, that when men are elevated to wealth, few persons have the courage or the honesty to reprove them.

Ahab was reproved by Elijah, and Herod by John the Baptist. Had they listened to these expostulations, they might, after all, have escaped the sad consequences of their crimes; but by refusing to do this, they perished in their sins. However grating, therefore, the language of reproof may be, you could not suffer a greater calamity than to be doomed to hear it no more.

Reproof, when received, becomes sanctified. It brings down upon us the Divine blessing and influence: and hence produces noble and permanent "He that heareth reproof getteth understanding." The Corinthians had fallen into some improprieties, which threatened their purity and progress as a church. St. Paul addressed to them a letter of seproof, which plunged them into godly sorrow, awakened them to renewed zeal, and essentially contributed to their happiness and prosperity. Peter had ventured to deny his Master. Jesus beheld him with a look of reproof. He went out, and wept bitterly; and was rescued from final apostacy. David had plunged into fearful crime, and was become dreadfully callous and asleep in his sin. Had he been left undisturbed, he would probably have slept the sleep of death. But when reproved by Nathan, he was arrested in his downward career.

Let us then cherish a willingness to be reproved, and pray for the spirit which led the Psalmist to say, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil."

X.

Christian Sobriety.

OH, we sometimes think, if we had nothing else do but to mind religion, we should be enabled to me our calling and election sure. But many of us hav thousand things to mind, as well as our souls. There are our families and our farms and our merchandise. and our sorrows and our joys, and our gains and our losses, and our friends and our foes; and all these things require attention. The moral effect produced by this habit of attention to earthly things is, in many cases, to intoxicate and stupify the mind: the heart becomes surcharged with the cares and pleasures of this life. But this is not necessary. We may learn to regard the world and all its concerns as what they really are. - matters of secondary and lesser importance. The contemporaries of Noah were employed in eating and drinking, planting and building, marrying and giving in marriage. No doubt, to a considerable extent, Noah himself was obliged to do the same. He had many things to mind, beside merely building the ark. That, however, was his great work. With all his other cares and duties, there was a sense in which the ark was the one sole care and business of his life. When the apostle exhorts us to "be sober," he means that we should attend to the business of salvation as Noah attended to the building of the ark. That, amidst all our duties, this should stand out as the great duty of man, the one thing needful. However earnestly we labour for "the meat which perisheth," that should be no labour, as compared with the manner in which we labour for "that meat which This is religious endureth unto everlasting life." sobriety. This is Christian moderation.

[&]quot;Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Who can describe the freeness and extent of that grace? There will be a glorified body, admission through the gates into the city, exemption from pain and sorrow and suffering and death, and a participation in that gives which Christ had with the Father before the world.

began; -- and all these bestowed as matters of grace. through the mediation of Jesus. Many things belonging to this world may engage our attention, and interest our minds; our thoughts and affections may become loose and scattered, so as to entangle our spirits and retard our progress towards heaven; but a due consideration of "the grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ," will lead us to gather them in, and gird them up again. A little worldly honour or prosperity may probably intoxicate our minds, and fill us with an unhallowed excitement and joy; but thoughts of that grace will soon sober them again, and lead us to set our affection on things above. Our trials and difficulties may be so formidable that our souls may be discouraged on account of the way, and perhaps we may be tempted to sit down in despair: but the crown of glory is so bright, and the sight of the Saviour is so desirable, that a look toward heaven will induce us to arise, and hope and strive "to the end "

XI.

Godliness.

Paul's enemies arrested him in the temple, "and the people ran together;" but when the Roman captain and soldiers appeared, these infuriated men "left beating of Paul." But the presence of God is far more impressive; and it will awe and restrain the most excited among men. We are to walk before Him in holiness. In the highest tumult of passion we must remember that God is near. If our temper and habits cease to be godly, it is in vain to expect admittance into heaven. Nobody forgets God in heaven. The "great white throne" is ever there. The pure in heart see God in heaven. They see Him on earth. This is godliness.

XII.

On Providence.

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

Matt. x. 30.

By this expression (which was perhaps proverbial) our Lord strongly asserts the universality of God's over-ruling Providence. While He controls all the movements of inanimate nature, and supplies the wants of the brute creation, He exercises a special

superintendence over man.

That there is such a thing as the Providence of God appears from the fact announced in the Bible, that God is the Creator of the world, and from the representations of His character which that book contains. It tells us that He is infinitely wise and just, powerful and good: that He made the earth, and all its inhabitants; that He is, consequently, our Father, and we are His offspring. Now, we know that a man of ordidary kindness and humanity cannot abandon His own offspring, especially if he has the ability of providing for them, but will exercise over them a superintending care, and administer to their necessities. Nay, even brute creatures are tenderly concerned for their young. How then can the Father of the universe neglect His own offspring, or disregard the work of His own hands? If He is infinitely wise and powerful, He can, and if He is infinitely good, He will,—seeing He sustains towards us the intimate and endearing relation of Creator and Father,-superintend our concerns, and provide for our necessities.

This notion is corroborated by the occurrences of every day, and by a long train of events, registered in the sacred writings. Whoever has acquired the notion of a Providence will find it confirmed by the motions of the heavenly bodies, and by the constant succession.

of the seasons, all conspiring to give fertility to the earth, and thus to provide for the wants of man and beast. The Bible is the history of Providence. It is a record of a series of events, all tending to confirm the great principle that the world is under the constant, kind, and efficient superintendence of its great

and gracious Creator.

The doctrine of Providence shows us the groundlessness of anxious care. To creatures such as we are, a portion of worldly good is indispensably requisite. As God has decreed that in consequence of our guilt we shall eat our bread "in sorrow," and as many of us can only procure it, even in health and strength, with care and exertion, in the prospect of losses, sickness, or old age, we often give way to the most fearful apprehensions. These fears, however, are totally groundless; since our Lord has assured us that if we "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness," the things we "have need of" shall be added unto us.

There are several considerations, suggested by our blessed Saviour, which arise out of the doctrine of the Providence of God, and which clearly show the unreasonableness of such fears, as long as we continue to do His will, and confide in His care. While God possesses an infinitely paternal regard for His creatures, while the riches of time and eternity are all at His disposal, so He "knoweth that we have need of these things;" and can He, under such circumstances, withhold them? Again, it is notorious that He supplies the wants of other creatures, who are by nature decidedly inferior to man, who are infinitely less valuable in His estimation, and who are totally incapable of any care or contrivance of their own. Again, He has already bestowed upon us benefits of the most rich and invaluable character. He has given us a body which is fearfully and wonderfully made, a richly curious, and useful, and consummately excellent machine: He has

animated that body with a living, conscious, and immortal soul, a principle which far excels in value all that the world can give; can He then deny us a little food and raiment? See that you avoid all sin; take care to please God; and then remember that your Father which is in heaven, who controls the universe, who has all the treasures of the world at His disposal, is so attentive to you as to number the hairs of your head,

and give your fears to the wind.

The doctrine of Providence should teach us submission to those afflictions which sometimes befal us. the hairs of our head are all numbered, then these afflictions, by whomsoever occasioned, come to us by special Divine direction and appointment. appointment, therefore, must be an act of justice and wisdom and goodness. If we are living in sin, we suffer no more than we deserve. If we are living to God, we suffer no more than will be conducive to our These considerations have always led the wisest and holiest of men to bow with silent submission to bereavements and calamities. It is not at all times easy for us to discern the wisdom or kindness of these painful dispensations, and sometimes they appear to be of a very contrary character; but then we should think it is much easier for us to be ignorant and mistaken, in many things, than for God to act unwisely or unkindly. The latter cannot be; the former is happening every day. Moreover, the Bible assures us there is nothing wanting but a loving resignation and obedience to the Divine will, to make all our afflictions issue in our immortal perfection and blessedness.

The doctrine of Providence shews us the propriety of making our temporal affairs the subjects of our prayers and praises. No wonder those are often embarrassed who neglect to ask of God the things they need. Those who are so occupied with worldly care and toil that they have have no time to pray cannot be surprised if they faint under trials. No wonder

money and prosperity should prove a curse, and alienate the heart from God, when they have not been sanctified by prayer. If God has the same control over the concerns of our business and family as over the affairs of our salvation, then the one should be the subject of our prayers as well as the other. If His kindness is unceasing, so ought our gratitude and love.

The doctrine of Providence teaches us the folly of Men are generally induced to do what their conscience condemns for the sake of some real or imaginary present and worldly good. But if the Maker of the world continues to exercise a vigilant and ceaseless superintendence over all its several parts. then we must be subject to His constant inspection; all we think and do must be known to Him. sources of wealth, all the springs of pleasure, are under His control; and He can shut or open them as He chooses. Without His blessing riches are but splendid poverty, and pleasure but gilded pain. The way to possess the world, to be really benefited, and not injured, by its good things, is to please Him who is the Lord and Giver of all it has to bestow.

This doctrine points us to a day of judgment, and a future state of retribution. In the present economy of Providence there is much of what is mysterious, and has the appearance of disorder and confusion. In many cases, the wicked escape with impunity; and the righteous are chastened of God, and injured by man. Although we see evident indications of a Divinely wise and an Almighty hand, yet the whole has manifestly the appearance of something incomplete, of a design as yet but partly carried into execution. It is like a watch which is but partially made and put together. While there are evident strokes of superior wisdom, and of a curious and noble design, there are also many things for which we cannot account, and the wisdom and utility of which we never shall

perceive, till we see the whole in its finished state. The schemes of Providence will be completed only by the transactions of the great day. But completed they must be. The Divine wisdom, equity, and goodness will not remain for ever the subjects of dispute. He will bring forth His judgment as the light: and therefore that day must come. Get your hearts impressed with its certainty, its terror, and its glory; and "seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

XIII.

Providence Acknowledged.

"Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you,"—Rom. i. 10.

THESE words disclose to us an important feature in the temper and habit of St. Paul's mind,—his devout and habitual recognition of the Providence of God. He was desirous to visit the imperial city; but that, he saw, was impossible without Divine permission, and hence he was in the constant habit of making it a

subject of prayer.

When we are once brought really and truly to see God in any thing, we shall soon see Him in every thing. When we have once begun to behold the beauty of the Lord in His sanctuary, we shall soon see it in the daily and hourly events of life. After St. Paul had become acquainted with God in Christ, he soon perceived that all his goings were ordered by the Lord, that his life and breath were in the Divine hand; and he was led, from that time, practically and prayerfully to acknowledge this in all his ways. He wished to visit Rome; but durst not venture upon such a journey without the Divine permission, and

had no hope of accomplishing it but by the Divine blessing.

Yet there are persons who profess to have learned religion at the feet of the great apostle, while they treat his sentiments and habits with contempt. It is foolish, they tell us, to think that God has anything to do with travelling; and however many journies they take, they seldom consult or in any way refer to Him upon the subject. Although a servant would not presume to leave his home without consulting his master, and none but a disobedient child would go abroad without the leave of his parents, yet there are professing Christians who call God Father and Master, while they go in and out without asking His permission, or imploring His blessing. The reason why they thus differ from this great apostle is not because they have more sense and more philosophy, but because they have less religion. The habit of living without God is no mark of a superior mind. St. Paul was a man of the most elevated intellect, and vet his journey to Rome was the subject of unceasing prayer.

It has been said by a pious man that he that will observe a Providence will never want a Providence to observe. But a very few years after the date of this Epistle the desire of Paul was fulfilled, and that in a manner which must have convinced him that it was in answer to prayer. So many doors for preaching the Gospel were opened for him in Asia and Greece, and the churches were so much in need of his presence. that to tear himself away from such a field of labour. for the purpose of visiting Italy, appeared next to At length, however, he was torn away impossible. by the hand of violence and persecution. Paul was also a poor man, and associated with a poor people; and the amount of passage money necessary to convey him to Rome was not always at his command. At length, arrested by the Roman governor, at the instance of the Jews, in order to escape from their malice, he was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; and so he was sent to Rome, as a matter of course, in the character of a prisoner, by the civil authority, and at the public expense; and while waiting there, until the Emperor could hear his case, he continued "two whole years in his own hired house, receiving all who came unto him, and preaching the kingdom of God;" and thus fulfilled his ministry in the capital of the world, according to his desire.

Did we cherish the same spirit of unceasing prayer, we should doubtless experience much of the same grace. Disappointments, losses, and reverses in our temporal affairs, are subjects of frequent and bitter complaint; but probably the number of these might be greatly lessened by the power of prayer. thy ways acknowledge God, and He shall direct thy paths." Whoever acknowledges Him as Paul did will often see the tide of human affairs turned in his favour, by an unseen hand, in such a way as will constrain him to say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." But whether this be the actual result or not, certain it is that we never enter fully into the spirit of the Christian religion until, after the example of this great apostle, our travelling and our resting, our going out and our coming in, our down-lying and our uprising, our trials and our pleasures, our buying and our selling, our profits and our losses, our joys and our sorrows, and all our earthly concerns, are sanctified by the habitual acknowledgment of God, and by the exercise of unceasing prayer.

XIV.

Dun Thoughts.

THERE is a very close connexion between the inward thoughts and the outward behaviour. As the waters

of a fountain naturally and necessarily overflow and run away, so a man's thoughts issue forth in corresponding words and deeds. The wise man has distinctly intimated that when an improper thought has been once formed and entertained, it is extremely difficult, if not wholly impossible, to avoid the words and acts to which it directly leads. If therefore we do not wish to be hurried into the one, we must not venture upon the other. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." Although thoughts are formed in the chamber of the heart, they have no natural tendency to stay there. On the contrary, they press for utterance. They come forth and appear, not only in our savings and doings, but also in our looks and gestures; and this often at a time and in a manner altogether unknown to ourselves. So that if you suffer yourselves to cherish a criminal thought, you will soon be surprised to find that the thing has got abroad, and become known to those persons from whom you were the most anxious to conceal it. All this will be brought about in a way at once so rapid and unaccountable, that it will seem as "if a bird of the air" had carried the news, and that which had "wings" had told the matter. If it is your wish that no sin should be found in your life, you must tolerate none in the If you desire your words and actions to be holy, you must see that your thoughts are pure and good. Our first and principal solicitude must be about the heart.

"The love of Christ," says St. Paul, "constraineth us." While judging and reasoning and thinking upon it, they felt its moral force: they were carried away as by a torrent, and constrained to live for Him who had lived and died for all. The human mind will always assume something of the colour and character of those things on which it habitually thinks and dwells.

Hence, says the apostle, "whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Think on them, and you will do them. Think on them, and they will be received into your nature, and appear in your outward behaviour. Think of God in Christ, and you will resemble Him more and more. You are to be made like Him by looking at Him. If you desire to do more for God, and to speak more for God, and to enjoy more of God, you must think more of Him.

Think of Him, and He will think of you. He remembered us in our low estate; and He expects love for love, and thought for thought.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;" and a man is either bad or good, happy or miserable, according to the way in which his thoughts are generally employed. There are dying people who spend their time in looking at their fellow-sinners: hence they are frequently talking of the follies and faults of the persons by whom they are surrounded. But we shall be delivered from such a habit as this whenever our thoughts are brought to fix and settle upon their proper object. Job's friends were undoubtedly to blame, and he exposed their errors and mistakes with great keenness and ability; but he became much less fluent on that subject after his thoughts had become more fully arrested and staved upon his God. "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee :--wherefore,"-now my attention is fixed, not upon other people, but upon myself,—I blame, not them, but myself,-"I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

At the same time there is much in a sight of God to lift up the human mind, as well as to cast it down.
Paul and Silas remembered their Maker in their prison;

and they thought about His character and about His purposes of mercy in Christ Jesus, until they became all on fire with the subject, and at midnight they "prayed, and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them." And why should not you cherish the same spirit? Perhaps you are afflicted, greatly afflicted, and very much tried,—and so were they. They were in gaol, in an inner prison, their backs bleeding with recent stripes, and their feet fast in the stocks: but their minds were free, and still they thought of God. "Oh yes," say some of you, "and so could I; but I have so many other things to think about. While I am caring and caring about the world and its affairs, the thought of God is driven out of my And do you suppose that they had nothing to think about? When men get into the hands of the police, and are brought before a magistrate, and committed to jail, they have need to have their wits about them. They thought about their liberty which was lost; they thought about their lives which were in danger; but they could not forget their God. could they think of Him without singing His praises.

XV.

A Mind Stayed on God.

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow."—Matt. vi. 34.

THE human mind is an active principle, and if we are not thinking about one thing, we shall be about another. The great design of God in these words is to fix our attention upon Himself. He did not require us to think less about food and raiment that we might think more about politics and literature and philosophy, and those other earthly things which are deemed more dignified and noble in their nature. The character

of God is the great subject which ought to occupy the mind of man. The universe is full of Him; and it is proper that He should fill the thoughts of His creatures. Whatever may engage a man's attention, whether he be picking up straws, or counting the stars, getting money, or getting bread, or ruling the world, if these things cause him to forget God, he acts the

part of a fool.

Great efforts have been made by our adorable Creator to force Himself upon our attention. He has spread before us the material universe, in all its magnitude and splendour, to lead us to think of its great Architect and Preserver. All the dispensations of Providence, whether of judgment or of mercy, are designed to call our attention to their Author. The wonderful scheme of our redemption by Christ is intended to bring "glory to God in the highest," by fixing upon Him the thoughts and affections of mankind. great duty and privilege of the Gospel is to love the Lord our God with all our heart. Love always leads to the habit of thinking on the object beloved. thoughts of the miser dwell upon his treasure; and the man who truly loves God habitually and delightfully meditates upon Him. The state of mind to which Providence and Redemption are intended to bring us is thus described by the sacred writers:--"I have set the Lord always before me." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee." A mind stayed upon God is a house founded upon a rock, which can bid defiance to the winds and waves; but a spirit settled upon the world is a house built upon the sand; and amidst all the storms of life. and the floods of death, it must fall, and great will be the fall of it. Our Lord calls our minds away from earth, in order that we may think upon God. When He says, "Take no thought for the morrow," He also says, "Let your thoughts be fixed and stayed upon Him who is your Father and Benefactor, and on whom you entirely and constantly depend."

It may probably be objected that such a habit of mind is unfriendly to industry. If we think so much of God, it may be said, we shall forget our families. and neglect our employment, and of course be conducted to beggary and want. This, however, is most assuredly a misapprehension, since an habitual regard to God in Christ must lead to a very different result. The language of the Creator to His creatures, both in the Old and New Testaments, is, that "with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." His sovereign pleasure, announced in the most distinct and emphatic manner, is, that if any will not work, neither shall he St. Paul had heard of some among the Thessalonians who walked "disorderly," "working not at all," but were "busy-bodies;" and we may rest assured that these persons were destitute of the spirit of religion, and strangers to habits of communion with God. When Joseph in Egypt was tempted to sin, he replied, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" From these words it is plain that amid all the changes of his eventful life, and under all the wrongs and privations he endured, he had set the Lord always before him. Yet this habitual reference to God did not impair his industry, or make him less careful about the temporal well-being of himself and his fellow-creatures. On the contrary, he was led by his habits of intercourse with God to become the father of his country, and the means of preserving, not only his own family, but all the people of Egypt, in a time of great scarcity and distress. The great apostle Paul was carried away by an overpowering torrent of love to Christ, and seemed to know and care about nothing but Him; and this very principle caused him with his own hands to minister to his necessities, and to them that were with him, and thus to show to others how that so labouring they ought "to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said. It is more blessed to give than to receive."

And if an habitual regard to God will not interfere with our industry, nor make us less diligent with reference to temporal things, neither will it prevent the prosperity of our labours; nay, it will rather tend to ensure their success by bringing down upon them His almighty blessing. Accordingly, the Psalmist says, "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." As if he had said, "Take no thought for the morrow; let your thoughts be stayed on God; humbly and diligently use the means which He has appointed; and assuredly this will not lead to beggary and ruin; for verily thou shalt be fed." Again, "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Poverty and rags are the things you dread; food and raiment are the things you desire. Instead of taking thought for the morrow, find your enjoyment in meditating on the character of God, and in doing His will; and He will deliver you from all that you fear, and give you all that you desire.

The holy Psalmist has also further added, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." You work that you may have bread. You are careful and saving that you may pay your way, and not get into debt. Do not therefore take the matter into your own hands by taking thought for the morrow; but commit your way unto God, by staying your minds on Him, and He will bring it to pass,

according to your labours and wishes.

He has already given you life and a body; and is not life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Having given us the greater, He has obliged Himself to give the less. If a parent makes a present to a child, it is something complete, and fit for use. He would not give him a garment half made up, and which could not therefore be worn. Having given you life, God will give you meat; having given you a body, He will provide raiment. The birds are fed, although

they "neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; the lilies are clad, although they "neither toil, no spin;" and surely you will be fed and clothed when you use all the means which God has appointed fo that end.

PART FOURTH.

T

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thuself."

Our whole life is to be constructed on a principle of benevolence. We are not to consider ourselves as isolated individuals, who have only to take care of ourselves and of our own concerns, but as parts of a great whole, as members of a vast social body, and are to treat all others as part of ourselves. We are to divide our advantages with them, and to employ our time, our talents, and our property for their benefit as well as for our own. By hearkening to these benevolent commandments our peace will be made to flow like a river. Acts of justice and mercy to our fellow-men, as well as acts of piety towards God, shall in no wise lose their reward.

To enable and require us to "do good" is the greatest blessing which God has to impart to man; because this is to make us, in our degree, like Himself.

II.

Antinomianism and infidelity rebuked. James i. 27.

THERE were many heresies introduced into the Christian church in the apostolic age. Some parties made all religion to consist in the performance of certain outward ceremonies; others, in the attainment of eminent

degrees of knowledge; others, in the exercise of a strong faith;—but all agreed in supposing that it had little to do in controlling the passions, or regulating the conduct. The general tendency of these systems of error was to relax the bonds of moral obligation. All who embraced them felt themselves eased and liberated, in reference both to the sins and sorrows of their fellow-men; that is, they thought themselves freed from the self-denial of abstaining from their sins, and also from the trouble and expense of relieving their sorrows. The natural consequence was, that they were often found in the company of sinners, and but seldom among the poor and afflicted, to help and console.

Now, says the apostle, the genuine principles of Divine truth are just the reverse of all this. They have no sympathy with human wickedness; they have much sympathy with human sorrow. Their effect is to alienate a man from sinners, and to unite him to sufferers. Whoever is living under their influence will be found leaving the haunts of wickedness, and going to the abodes of misery. "Pure religion and undefiled,"—that spirit and temper which God puts into the hearts of His people, and which alone He will approve and accept at the last,—leads them "to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," and to keep themselves "unspotted from the world."

While rebuking the Antinomians of his own age, the apostle has at the same time furnished a reply to the infidels of our own day. These are taken up with various earthly discoveries and improvements, and would fain persuade us that religion is an antiquated thing, the offspring of former ignorance and folly, and altogether beneath the notice of a thinking and intelligent man. To all such arguments and insinuations we have a full reply, when St. James here tells us, in a few words, what is the practical tendency of the Gospel, and what it proposes to do for mankind.

First of all, its design is to bring the fallen soul of man back again to God, and to open a friendly intercourse between him and his adorable Creator: In the next place, to preserve him from all the corrupt principles and practices which have so long been the reproach and curse of mankind: Lastly, to make men kind and benevolent one towards another, more especially to the weak, the unprotected, and the sick. While the Gospel is bestowing all this happiness, preventing so much wickedness and misery, and drying so many tears, is it possible that any body can persuade you that it is nothing better than "a cunningly-devised fable?" As men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles; so, holiness and happiness are never produced by imposture and delusion. Is it possible that any person can make you think such a religion as this unworthy of your attention, and that you are better without it than with it? To be actuated by these principles, is it not to live the life of an angel, and to enjoy a heaven upon earth?

III.

Good Nature and Christian Love.

"For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain."-I Thess. iii. 5.

THESE words are clearly the language of a heart not employed in thinking about self, but melting and glowing with tenderness and concern respecting other Although himself a persecuted wanderer, people. obliged to flee from place to place in order to save his life, yet the apostle was filled with solicitude about these Thessalonian converts; and at length became so uneasy on their account as to be compelled to send forth his beloved Timothy to inquire into their circumstances, and render them such assistance as might be within his power.

What is commonly called good nature has been compared to Christian charity, and the spirit of Gallio mistaken for that of Paul. According to profane history, Gallio was an eminently good-natured man, ever ready to perform an act of kindness, and one who avoided whatever was unjust and dishonourable. What is said of him in the New Testament tends to confirm this favourable report of his character. There are many among ourselves who possess a similarly kind and happy temper, which has led them to perform many good and benevolent actions; and who therefore conclude that they resemble the true servants of Christ, that they share in the spirit which dictated these words, and that they love their neighbour as themselves. But good nature and Christian love are not one and the same thing. In several respects they are essentially distinct.

Good nature is a *natural*, and Christian love is a *gracious* endowment. One is the result of a happy constitution of body and mind: the other is the moral life of God communicated to the soul of man. The former is born with us: the latter is a gift which is subsequently bestowed. There never was a period in the history of Gallio in which he was not well-disposed and kind-hearted; but Paul did not always possess the charity which distinguished the later years of his life.

Good nature exists independently of the Gospel; but Christian love is produced and sustained entirely by evangelical teaching. It is possessed only by those who are acquainted with the story of redeeming love, and who understand how God for Christ's sake hath loved and forgiven them; and it is always the most vigorous and fruitful in those whose minds are most fully imbued with the truths of our holy religion.

Mere good nature will weep at a funeral, inquire about the sick, relieve the poor, melt at the sight of

the miseries of war, and hasten to help the widow and the fatherless; but there are other forms of wretchedness and danger of which it takes no cognizance what-Christian love does all this; but it does a great deal more. It looks at every mode of outward and temporal bereavement and suffering, and hastens to relieve them: but it also looks at man's moral nature. at the laws he has violated, the judgment that awaits him, and the heaven and the hell that belong to the moral government of God. Paul thought much about these Thessalonian converts: what were the circumstances in their case which most filled him with solicitude? He thought of the sorrows of the sick, the privations of the poor, the defects of their civil government, and the troubles of their outward condition: but, above all, of their many temptations to sin, and the guilt and ruin in which they would be involved, if they should be drawn to save their property or their lives by denying the Lord that bought them. He thought about the Gentile nations, and the miseries under which they groaned. But he considered not merely the delusion involved in idolatry, and the way in which it affected the outward and temporal condition of the people, but the wilful apostacy in which the system began. He thought of an idolator as of a man who was without God and without hope in the world.

Paul thought of the Thessalonian converts until he could neither rest by day, nor sleep by night; and he was morally compelled to make some effort on their behalf. Jesus "remembered us in our low estate," and set His heart upon saving us: and if that mind be in us which was in Him, and which also dwelt in His holy apostles, we shall think of our fellow-Christians, of our unconverted countrymen, of heathen idelators, of unbelieving Jews. We shall think of the generations yet unborn, and of the provision which is or ought to be made for the instruction and salvation of the world. We shall think of these things until we

can "no longer forbear," until our thoughts break forth in words and actions, and we become, each in his measure, "the light of the world, and the salt of the earth."

IV.

Well-daing.

"Let us not be weary in well-doing."—Gal. vi. 9.

1. Well-doing begins in an act of submission to Christ. The philosophy of this sentiment is contained in the history of Saul of Tarsus. He was a man of great learning, great energy, upright intentions, and a thorough patriot; but it was a mistake on his part to think that he could mend the plans of his Maker, or promote the interests of his countrymen by a course of opposition to Christ. Christ is the head of all philanthropists. God proposes to bless mankind by the agency and mediation of His Son. Paul never became a blessing to the world until he began to obey Christ, and to carry out and fulfil His high, and holy, and benevolent designs.

At the present day there is a great deal of spurious and anti-Christian benevolence abroad. There are patriots who talk of promoting the good of the country by subverting the institutions of Christianity. It seems to be the opinion of many that the world would become wonderfully happy, if they could but abolish the Sabbath, and bring the principles of revealed religion into neglect. But all who dream that they have found out a better method of doing good to the world than that which is revealed by God in the New Testament, and of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the great Head and Director, are mere quacks in benevolence, who are sure to torment and kill, while they profess to comfort and to cure. If you wish to do good, submit yourselves to Christ, accept of His mercy, place your-

selves at His disposal, and make it your simple business to do His will, and to fulfil His purposes of infinite wisdom and love.

2. While true well-doing begins in submission to Christ, so it constantly springs from a principle of love to Him. Nothing but this holy fire burning in a man's soul will urge him onward in a course of well-doing, and enable him to persevere amidst all its attendant discouragements. Remember, we are not called to do good merely in the poor paltry style of our fellow-men, but to be merciful "as our Father in heaven is merciful." And this is not to be done "grudgingly, nor of necessity." In well-doing there is to be "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." We must cherish the spirit of him who said, "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, if I may but fulfil the ministry and service enjoined upon me by the Lord Jesus Christ."

Some professors of religion say they have no time. and some have no money, and some no talents. the path of duty they see nothing but difficulties; and this is impossible, and that cannot be done. One has his business, and another has his family, and a third is afraid of his health. Yet these people tell us that upon Christ they build their hopes and their all, for time and eternity. Without Him, their condition in the hour of death and in the day of judgment would be that of the house built upon the sand; through Him, they hope to be like the house founded upon a Without His atonement and intercession, they cannot escape the wrath of God and the pains of hell; through it, they expect consolation in death, boldness in the day of judgment, and an entrance into the presence of God. According to their own account, Christ is their light, their life, their salvation, their all in all, for ever. Yet, after all this, love to Him does not in them assume the form of a master passion, and urgs them on to do His will, and set forth His praise.

What we all want is a brighter apprehension of the love of God to us in the gift of His Son. We must think of it again. St. Paul says, "The love of Christ constraineth us." Like a powerful current of water, it sweeps all our objections and excuses away, and bears us forward on its mighty bosom to such lengths of labour and usefulness as we thought it impossible for us ever to reach. What it did for them, it can do for us; and if we saw the death of Christ more clearly, and felt its influence more deeply, we should, in spite of ourselves, be—

"Constrain'd by Jesu's love to live The servants of mankind."

V.

Perfect Love.

Whoever attempts the conversion of a sinner will be sure to meet with opposition. Nothing can qualify a Christian to grapple with such a spirit as this but a perfect love of God and man. The coals of love are "coals of fire." Love is a moral power which acts upon stubborn spirits like fire upon metals, and causes even the iron sinew in the neck to become soft and Eloquence is pleasing; but it is often baffled. Power makes itself felt; but it is frequently resisted, and set at nought. Wealth has its influence upon others; but it is not seldom hated and despised. But "charity never faileth;" and there are many persons whose qualifications in other respects are very slender indeed, yet who, having been sanctified wholly, and filled with love to God, have been eminently owned of Him, rendered extensively useful to their fellow-men, and many will be their "crown of rejoicing" in the day of the Lord Jesus.

VI.

Christian Liberality.

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."—
Mat. vi. 20.

But although the practice of giving money in charity may, according to the principles of the Christian religion, be very profitable for individuals, according to the principles of political economy, it is very injurious to the community at large. "If," it is said, "you visit and relieve a man in old age, sickness, and poverty, or institute a society for such purposes, this will soon become known, and the general conclusion drawn from it will be, that what you have done once you will do again. Hence those who are in perfect health and strength, instead of trusting to their own resources for help in the day of distress, will rely upon your liberality. Instead of looking forward to the time of old age and sickness, and making provision for it by present industry, frugality, and self-denial, they will become thoughtless and prodigal, in the expectation that your charity will help them, as it has done others, in the day of their distress. When that day comes, your funds are exhausted, and you cannot relieve the misery which your ill-judged liberality has occasioned. By relieving one case of want you have created two, or ten. and done more harm than good."

Probably political economy cannot relieve misery without increasing it. This celebrated science is but a modification of philosophy; and human depravity has always been too strong for human philosophy. Ever since man became a sinner, his philosophy has been trying to check and control his depravity; but the actual result has been (except so far as God has interfered) that the world has been growing worse and worse. In utter defiance of all this philosophy, the command of God to man is, that distress is to be re-

lieved, wherever it exists in connexion with the means of relief. He is the great Owner of all the property upon earth, and the great Father of the human family. The tendencies and issues of all things are perfectly known to Him; and He can trace human actions to their most distant results and consequences.

This command is further enforced by the promise of a great and glorious reward. When a master not only issues his commands to his servants, but proceeds to stimulate their activity and zeal by promises and rewards, it is plain that he not only wishes them to do his work, but to do it in the most thorough and effectual manner. Thus does God urge His people, by the prospect of the most splendid rewards, to give plenteously, and disperse their property among the sick and needy.

To ask what class of Christians are required to give. is like asking what portion of the people of England are expected to be free. Blessed be God! we are all free here. Universal personal freedom is not more in accordance with the great principles of our civil constitution than universal liberality is in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Gospel. Our civil constitution has been reared by the spirit of freedom; and the entire evangelical system has been produced by the spirit of liberality. Christianity began by giving; and is propagated by giving. The blessed God not only gives us rain and fruitful seasons; but He "so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son" for its redemption. Christ loved us, and "gave Himself" for us. The Gospel, with all its blessings, is The holy apostles freely gave their the gift of God. lives and their all, and lived and died in the service of mankind. All Christians are expected to imbibe this spirit, and to act upon this principle. The rich must give, and the poor must give. Giving is the family spirit and the family practice in "the household of faith." In the Christian community giving is the rule, and receiving the exception. We must part with the habit of giving just as an Englishman parts with his liberty: that is, only in a desperate case, and when he cannot possibly help it. The spirit of freedom has prevailed in our country until it has driven slavery out of the It will be a happy thing when the spirit of pauperism is eradicated in the same way. We mean that spirit which leads a man to choose to beg rather than work: to depend upon others rather than upon himself. But the way to expel this vile spirit is not by contracting the system of Christian liberality, but by extending it. It must be made universal. All men everywhere must be taught to give. As the darkness is driven away by the presence of the light, so the spirit of selfishness and pauperism will be banished from the minds of men by the universal prevalence of the charity and liberality of the Gospel of Christ.

That wicked men will sometimes abuse this liberality is what may reasonably be expected. There is nothing which human depravity cannot abuse. It has perverted the Gospel itself. The evils which may be connected with Christian liberality are all accidental, and spring from a foreign source. Its blessings and advantages are innumerable, and arise, naturally and necessarily,

out of the system itself.

Christian liberality is the parent of industry. When the fire of love to God and man is kindled in a human bosom, it always puts the powers of mind and body in motion. He who wishes to give will begin to work that he may obtain something to give. Sturdy beggars tell us they can find nothing to do: charitable people are always busy. St. Paul laboured with his own hands; but it was love that made him do so: for he laboured in order that he might give. "These hands," he said, "have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me."

It may appear strange, but it is nevertheless true, that Christian liberality leads to economy and frugal

for a wish to give often leads people to try to save. The apostle John has described the qualifications of the person who is expected to be charitable. It is he who "hath this world's good." He who has something which is truly and properly his own. Not the man who has been running into debt until he is insolvent. If we give at all, it must not be our neighbours' property, but our own. Our Maker has said, "I the Lord love judgment; I hate robbery for burnt offering." We must therefore have "this world's good," that we may enjoy the privilege of giving. Men wish to give, and find that they must have in order to give, and then begin to save in order that they may have. greatest frugality and economy have often been connected with the greatest liberality; and many have thus actually become enriched by an inclination to give.

The habit of giving fosters a contented and grateful state of mind. David says, "Blessed is the man that considereth the poor." It is the constant habit of the liberal man to consider the poor. He wishes to give. and hence he looks about to see who is in need; and further considers which of these it is most proper to relieve, and how to do it wisely and effectually. selfish man, on the other hand, considers the rich. He is eager to receive; and they are the parties who have something to give. The result is, that he looks only on those whose circumstances are better than his own. and of course becomes filled with a spirit of discontent. But the liberal man, who "considereth the poor," looks chiefly at those more wretched than himself, and hence not only becomes contented with his own condition, but is filled with thankfulness to God, who has screened him from so many afflictions he might have been called to endure.

Acts of liberality, springing from right principles, are acceptable to God, and are crowned by His blessing. Our Lord said to His followers, "Take heed that ye do

not your alms before men to be seen of them." It is with some people a point of importance to have their liberality known and acknowledged; they give away considerable sums, and that is all the recompense they are ever likely to obtain. Our Lord did not mean to take away this little paltry reward, without giving us something better in its place. St. Paul says, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." Enoch had "this testimony, that he pleased God." The plaudits of little children are important to those who can obtain nothing better; but those who have served their country, and received the thanks of Parliament, and all the honours their sovereign has to give, will think little of the other.

It may appear somewhat strange that in the Scriptures cheerfulness should be made an ingredient of Christian liberality. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." It is sometimes a hard task with men to part with their money: yet true Christian liberality is sure to lead to cheerfulness. It is the best proof we can exhibit of an entire trust in God. It is in vain to talk of trusting God, until we have learned to give. Those who trust Him with their money, by giving it away on the strength of His promises, trust Him with their all; and they "shall not be confounded."

VII.

"Redeeming the Time."

For consider that it is but a small portion that is allotted to us. Man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live. His days and nights fly with the swiftness of a weaver's shuttle. Of this very short period much is already gone. As to the future, suppose we live several years longer, the greatest proportion of these must be spent in the necessary avocations of life. Little can be given directly to the

concerns of eternal salvation. But in fact we are only sure of the present. We have not an instant to lose.

Consideralso in what light time is viewed by men when they are laid on the bed of death. It is said that Hagar wept when the water in her bottle was spent; and it is no uncommon thing for men to weep when their time is spent. They then stand upon that point which divides mortal from immortality. They have both worlds in their view; and they see the importance of time by its connection with eternity. When the subject is placed in such a light as this, even good men often lament their misspent time. Their prevailing sentiment in these solemn circumstances is, that were thev entrusted with life again, they would be far more prompt and diligent in the pursuit of salvation than they actually have been. What then are the feelings of an awakened and unpardoned sinner in these awful circumstances, when he sees the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and he is not saved? Can we hear these lament their foolish and mistaken conduct. and still continue to tread in their steps?

But let us draw aside the veil, and ask what is the light in which time is viewed by lost spirits. Ask them how they came to this sad place, and they will answer, as with one consent, "By the misimprovement of time." "I attended to my business," says one; "but I forgot my soul." "I slept," says another, "when I should have watched; I trifled, when I should have prayed; I indulged in frothy conversation, when I ought to have been searching the Scriptures." Were these men suffered to return to the world, would they not be ready literally to execute the apostle's resolution "not to know anything among men, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified?" This is a privilege which we possess; but which they are not permitted to enjoy.

Consider also the great profit of this work. No man likes an unproductive employment. It is reward that sweetens labour. The man who redeems time is

constantly gaining; he who trifles it away is as constantly losing; and when each comes to strike the balance of his account at the last, how vast will be the difference! God gave to each a talent of opportunity. The one improved it, the other squandered it away; and this is the true reason of the difference between lost souls and glorified spirits. It is of no consequence upon what a man has laid out his talent of opportunity, if he has not laid it out so as to gain heaven by it, it is a total loss: he has lost both principal and interest. He who makes a right use of his time will gain all the blessings of grace and glory.

VIII.

Earth and Beaven.

2 Peter 1. 12-15.

Every true Christian is connected with two worlds. He is an inhabitant of earth, but an heir of heaven. He is as really connected with heaven as was the prophet Elijah, when he had received an intimation that he was about to be conveyed away from earth by a chariot of He may be unnoticed and unknown; but there belongs to him a "house not made with hands," and an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Yet those very persons who are so closely allied to heaven, and are shortly to enter the presence of their Master, are inhabitants of earth, and in all respects identified with the present state of things. As members of civil and religious society, they are expected to bear their part in all that is pleasant and all that is disagreeable in the general business of life. God says to His covenant people, "Be ye holy; for I am holy:" and in the same book it is written, "Deal not falsely; neither lie one to another." The commonest duties of morality, all that man owes to man, whatever is due to our families, to our neighbours, to our country, is a part of that holiness "without which no man shall see the Lord." While living on earth we must be actuated by the spirit of heaven; and in performing the duties of life, we must be influenced by motives derived from our Creator and Redeemer. At the same time, we are directed in the New Testament practically to remember our connexion with heaven, and to be like servants watching for the coming of their master.

This two-fold spirit is fostered by the Gospel of Christ. No man can have its solemn lessons continually in his mind without becoming a useful member of society here, while he has "a good hope" through grace, and is expecting soon to be a glorified spirit in the presence of his adorable Saviour.

Stephen is described as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. The verities of the Gospel had taken entire possession of his mind. These great evangelical truths filled his understanding, inflamed his affections, and controlled and directed every part It was because he was connected of his conduct. with this world, and sympathized with all the sorrows of humanity, and especially because he was tenderly interested in the necessities of widows and children. that he was appointed to the office of a deacon. the same time his conduct shows how closely he was connected with the world to come, and how full and joyous was his hope of future glory. Had he been a merely worldly-minded man, he would have confined himself to the duties of his office, been content to "serve tables" and take care of the poor, and would have avoided the terrible martyrdom to which he was doomed. But death had no terrors to him on account of his connexion with heaven. His mind was full of the teachings of the Gospel. It was a sight of the reward prepared for those who turn many to righteousness which led him to act as he did. While

his enemies passed upon him the sentence of death, he said, "I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." In the very act of dying he committed his spirit into the hands of Jesus, and afterwards peaceably "fell asleep."

Were we always thinking of the things of which Jesus thought we should probably tread in His steps, live as He lived, and die as He died. In all His conduct we see nothing like indifference to this world because He was about to leave it. His last addresses to His disciples evinced the most tender concern for their welfare. His very last act on earth was to bless and encourage them. Even as He hung upon the cross, and was engaged in that great redeeming act which had been contemplated in the counsels of God from eternity, He committed His mother to the care of His servant John in language which led that disciple to take her to his own house, and provide for her till her death.

While the conduct of Jesus so clearly showed that He was fully connected with this world, the actions of His disciples showed them equally connected with that which is to come. It was the hope of rejoining their glorified Master which led them to set the Jewish authorities at defiance, and to go on spreading the Gospel. They would not have displayed such a noble courage, nor risen to such lofty heroism in the cause of Christ, had they not expected in due time to follow Him to heaven.

Dorcas was a devout Christian woman, "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." This excellent female sickened and died. Peter became the instrument of restoring her to life. During her life-time she had felt like one of the inhabitants of this world, and had employed herself in making coats and garments for the poor. She had been not merely in the suburbs of heaven, but had actually seen "the King in King beauty," and entered the good land which to us appears

"far off." When restored from death to life, all her former feelings would return; she would resume her employment of making garments for the poor, and clearly show that her interest in all that appertained to the well-being of this world was not abated in the

slightest degree.

That religion which fosters a love to the people in this world, even in those who are nearest to heaven, also allures to Paradise those who are most intimately connected with earth and its concerns. Young people who know the Word of God, and have their minds filled with its truths, will feel themselves closely connected with heaven, and find their heart and their treasure already there. They may die soon, or they may be, for many years, strangers and pilgrims upon earth; but the Bible will teach them to regard heaven If they die in early life, their angels as their home. shall see the face of our Father in heaven; if they live on to a good old age, and are gathered as a shock of corn fully ripe, they shall find themselves in the garner of God.

St. Peter here says, "I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." This is the language of an old man to those who were far younger than himself. He expected soon to put off his tabernacle or covering of clay, and his soul would stand naked in the presence of its Judge. But before his departure he had made arrangements so that those he had left behind might still hear of the heaven to which he had gone. He well knew that while the truths of the Gospel filled their minds, they would influence their conduct, render them attentive to both the worlds with which they were connected, and lead them at once to discharge all the duties of the present life, and at the same time practically to seek the things which are above, "where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."

IX.

"In much Affliction."

Thess. i. 6.

THE Thessalonians, in much affliction, in the midst of uproar and confusion, insults and injuries, not only received the Gospel, and felt its transforming influence upon their hearts and lives, but also became a blessing to others. While the apostles were rendered extensively useful to others, they were great sufferers They were very poor, though making themselves. They endured hunger and thirst, and many rich. cold and nakedness, imprisonment and reproach. Yet in the midst of all these calamities they turned the world upside down. The Thessalonian converts were led to imitate these bright examples. While they endured the same sufferings, they engaged in the same labours of love. A poor widow was seen to cast in two mites, the whole of her property, into the treasury of the Lord; and many such, since then, have contributed liberally and efficiently to the cause of Christ. Perhaps you have been deprived of your friends; and so can do nothing but weep and lament. So was Elisha deprived of his father when Elijah went up "by a whirlwind into heaven." But then, instead of abandoning himself to grief and despair, he caught his mantle, and went on with his work. Perhaps you have large and dependent families, and are obliged to care much and to labour hard in order to get them bread. So had many of the New Testament saints. Each man was to provide for his own house; and yet with all their cares and toils to do good and to communicate they were not to forget; "for with such sacrifices,"—and especially in such circumstances,—"God is well pleased." Perhaps you are connected with wicked men, who treat all serious religion with opposition and contempt. Still you are called to do good. Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and delivered the testimony of Jesus with still greater energy and effect when the Jews were heard to contradict and blaspheme. If you are Christians, although you may be suffering Christians, still you are the lights of the world; and those lamps which are kindled by the hand of God, and fed with oil from heaven, often burn most brightly, and shine most gloriously during the dark and dreary night of affliction. You are the salt of the earth; and your seasoning power will be felt, even when you are crushed and broken by the calamities of life.

X.

Still there is Mope.

We are often filled with gloomy and distressing thoughts by the obstinacy of sinners. But when we consider that this is the work of God, and that it is in His hands, we begin to feel something of hope and encouragement. St. Stephen was so full of the Holy Ghost that his enemies were unable to resist the spirit and wisdom with which he spake. Yet Saul of Tarsus heard the sayings of this devout man, and witnessed his martyrdom, and his heart remained unsubdued and untouched. But when he was met by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, he fell to the earth, and his spirit submitted at once. Many sinners have resisted their parents and their ministers, and their pious friends; but they have not yet done with God, and we hope He has not yet done with them. They may yet be constrained to cry out, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." "God be merciful to me a sinner."

XI.

"A Spiritual Mouse."

1 Peter ii. 5.

A STONE brought from the quarry, and placed in a building, is not only the subject of a great change in itself, but it becomes united to other stones; and these together constitute one temple, characterized, it may be, by the utmost grandeur and magnificence, and devoted to the noblest purposes. Every true believer is not only justified and sanctified in himself, but is at the same time incorporated with a vast and holy community, and becomes a part of that house which is "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." He must therefore cherish sentiments of brotherly love towards all who hold the Head, and are united to the great Foundation and Corner-stone of the church. A contrary temper originates in a principle of pride, when individuals think of themselves more highly than they ought to think. What is a single stone or beam, when taken out of the building to which it belongs? A mere useless piece of lumber, fit only to be carried away and put out of sight. viduals are apt to forget how much of their personal importance and usefulness arises from their connexion with their brethren. The members of the church may differ from each other, just as the materials which compose a temple were brought from different places, and are possessed of different properties. The stones must not affect to despise the timber or the glass, nor the ornamental the plainer parts, nor the roof to look down with contempt upon the floor; for they are all mere materials in the hands of the great builder, and they together constitute but one temple. The followers of Christ are exhorted to "love one another, with a pure heart fervently." Christians are to find their own honour and their own happiness in loving and serving their brethren. Love is at once the cement and the glory of the church. This will render her firmer than a rock, and brighter than the sun; and prepare her to repel all the attacks of her enemies, to glorify God, and to bless and save the world.

XII.

Christian Fellowship.

On many accounts it is necessary that good people should understand one another. All of them know the Lord, each man for himself, from the least unto the greatest; but something of what each knows of God must be made known to his fellows. Men seldom become proficient in any thing which they are afraid to discuss, or don't like to talk about between them-Learning and philosophy are advanced by conversation and the interchange of mind with mind. If we are to make any progress in religion, or to be anything better than dwarfs in godliness, it must become with us the topic of free and frequent conversa-Scenes must be realized among ourselves similar to that which took place among the disciples at Jerusalem, when it was said to the two brethren, just returned from Emmaus, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon,"—and they reported how He had talked with them on the road, and was made known to them in breaking of bread; and while this conversation was going on, Jesus Himself drew near, and "stood in the midst." If we are to make anything out in religion, we must be in a position to talk about it; so that one may say, "Come hither, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what He hath done for my soul;" while a second replies, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears;" and a third reports, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." This will stir up the fire of our piety, and we shall magnify the Lord, and exalt His name together. We are all aware that there is but little of this going on in the world. Every man knows a little of the outward circumstances of his neighbour, but is often afraid to ask him what he knows concerning God, and the affairs of his soul and of eternity. We are therefore sent into the church that we may know what is meant by the communion of saints, and learn to have fellowship one with another, and also with God and His Son.

XIII.

Prayer for Rulers.

"I exhort therefore, that prayers, and giving of thanks, be made . . . for kings, and for all that are in authority."—I Tim. ii. 1, 2.

Christians are to cultivate a spirit of patriotism. They are honestly and zealously to seek the well-being of the country in which they live. Especially they are to seek its prosperity by advancing its religion; and to endeavour, by instruction and by a holy life to bring their countrymen to God, and by earnest prayer to bring God to their countrymen. They are thus to seek to bring heaven and earth together; to draw their country into the neighbourhood of the celestial regions; to link the throne of their sovereign to the throne of God; and thereby, as far as possible, to turn their earthly abode into a paradise.

The apostle is here inculcating intercessory prayers; such as respect not ourselves, but others, especially those with whom we are politically connected. Prayers which are selfish and personal must indeed precede those which are intercessory. Paul was a man of mighty and abundant prayer: he prayed for churches and for nations; for ministers, and kings, and emperors;

but he began by praying for himself: and every one of us must go and do likewise. But while we begin here, we must also be concerned for our country; we must ask on behalf of all men, and especially for rulers, and "all that are in authority," those blessings which they need, and which God has promised to bestow.

Let us remember that civil government, however well administered, cannot attain its end without the concurrence and blessing of Almighty God. trates and ministers both derive their office and authority from God, and are both dependent upon Him for success in that work which is given them to do. That religion and morality which is the life and soul of public happiness and prosperity has its seat in the heart. It can only be planted there by a Divine hand. Men can only lead "a quiet and peaceable life" while they live "in all godliness and honesty;" and godliness is the gift of God imparted to man. Magistrates may enforce the laws, by punishing those who break them, and thereby do something to deter others; but the Holy Spirit only can extinguish those evil desires which are the elements and vital principles of crime. Magistrates may command what is right to be done; but God alone can give men the disposition and ability to do it. What can a minister do without the Holy Spirit? He may be learned and eloquent; but he will be powerless, and his people will grow formal and worldly, in spite of it all. So a magistrate may be vigilant and talented and upright; but without a blessing from God resting on his labours, the people will become wicked, and consequently discontented and miserable.

But of all Christians, surely English Christians are the most bound to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority." We take the liberty of censuring our governors when they appear to do wrong. This we insist upon as a right; and this right we are very ready to use, and not always with perfect moderation. Now, it is cruel and unjust to censure and expose any man's weaknesses and faults when we have not used our best endeavours to correct them, and therefore to act thus in reference to those "in authority," if we have not prayed for them.

In many respects it is a happy circumstance that the great question of civil government is now receiving so much attention; for it is vitally connected with the best interests of man, and we hope its principles will be better understood in future than they ever yet have been. Still, God will teach us our entire dependence upon Himself. We may have the best possible form of government, and the wisest laws; but if we do not

pray, we shall be disappointed.

But while we are solicitous about the future, we must not forget the past. God expects the favours He has already bestowed to be remembered and acknow-The blessings of civil government, even under its worst forms, are numerous and great. Nero was a monster of cruelty and oppression: the hands of our own bigoted Mary were dyed in the blood of her martyred subjects: but the period of the domination of these unhappy princes was by no means so fruitful in crime as if there had been no government at all. Had men been left to prey upon one another, they would in all probability have been well-nigh exterminated from the face of the earth. If there is much to be thankful for, even under such governments as these, what ought to be our gratitude who repose under the shade of the British Constitution! A constitution and government which is not heathen, but Christian; not Popish, but Protestant; not tyrannical, but founded Many of us may be poor; but we are in freedom. We have many privations; but we sit under our own vine and fig tree, none daring to make us afraid. We have not every thing; but we have the main things,—personal freedom, and the Gospel of Christ.

It is possible the tempter may put it into your bearts

to say, "It cannot be that any prayers of mine should have any influence in blessing my country, in directing public opinion, and in hastening the conversion of the masses." But remember it is not merely kings and prophets, and great and eminent men, who have influence and power with God. We are expressly assured that "He forgetteth not the prayer of the humble." However poor, and obscure, and insignificant, you may have access to the ear of God. Besides, you expect to mingle with the great, the holy, and the good in a future world. But Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles, were all men of a public spirit. They thought not only about themselves, but sympathized with all mankind. They shared in the sorrows of others, and sought their happiness and salvation. You must resemble them in this world, if you intend to mingle with them in the next; and show that you possess the same enlargement of heart, by the frequency and fervour of your prayers for others, as well as for yourselves.

PART FIFTH.

T.

. Trusting in Riches.

WE may fancy we are in no danger of trusting in riches; yet we calculate upon deriving a great deal of happiness from them. We are not fully persuaded that it is all one with the Lord to save by many or by few, to make us happy either with riches or without them: and hence cannot heartily take up the language of the prophet (Hab. iii. 17, 18). But this is deifying the creature, making flesh our arm, and attempting to feed on the east wind. Trying times must shortly come. All our worldly advantages are but like a heap of feathers which lie at the mercy of the storm; and we know not how soon some sudden gust of wind will take them all away. The tempests of sickness and pain will speedily commence, when the frail vessel of our creature comforts will strike against the rocks of death, and be rendered a complete wreck; and then the promises of God will be the only plank that can sustain our sinking spirit.

II.

"Lave not the World."

If ever the words of a mere man deserved to be listened to with more than ordinary care, they are the words of this venerable apostle. He was the father of

the fathers of his age, and his writings prove that he was a master of the most profound maxims of moral wisdom. His heart was an overflowing fountain of love, and all his words were so many streams of kindness and charity. He was the personal friend of our Blessed Lord, the disciple whom Jesus loved. an inspired man. To him the Redeemer had fulfilled His promise, and had sent the Spirit of truth to guide him into all truth. He had an unction from the Holv One, and knew all things connected with human happiness and salvation. He has spoken to Christians of every age. Listen then to what he has to say:-"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." Love is always confiding. We cannot apprehend any mischief from that which we love: we repose in it with unbounded confidence, and feel that so far as it is concerned we are perfectly safe. Love is attended with complacency and satisfaction: we are delighted and satisfied, provided we have that which we love. We are reluctant to part with it. seems chained to our souls as with a chain of adamant: and to tear ourselves away from it we find to be difficult, and almost impossible. But "the world" and "the things that are in the world" must be regarded by a Christian with feelings very different from these.

III.

Moral Wealth.

"Who healeth all thy diseases."

THE great Author of the Gospel has said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." Again, He has said, "I will put my law into their mind, and write it in their heart, and cause them to walk in my statutes." This is moral health, and whatever is contrary to this is moral disease. Whoever

possesses the principle of love keeps the commandments of God, just as a healthy and vigorous man discharges the duties of life, because he knows it to be right, and feels it to be a pleasure. It is often said that of all earthly blessings health is the greatest. With it everything is right; without it everything is wrong. A healthy man is fit for all climates; a sickly man is fit for none. It is always either too hot, or too cold; and even the food he eats, in many cases, hastens his end. A man with an unsanctified heart is in a state of moral disease, and he can bear neither prosperity nor adversity. Perfect love is perfect moral health, and that, like perfect bodily health, prepares us for all conditions; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." Hence it is that a skilful physician acts not upon the surrounding atmosphere, but upon the physical constitution of his patient; knowing that when he is restored to health he can bear either the wind or the sunshine, the heat or the cold. same principle a wise and gracious God deals with His fallen creature man: for He does not seek to alter our outward condition, but our moral constitution. takes men in all circumstances, and by restoring them to moral health, by making their hearts right with Himself, He prepares them for all the dispensations of His providence.

IV.

Comfart in Sarraw.

It has sometimes happened that those who have found forgiveness have somewhat hastily concluded that their troubles were all at an end, and they would never again be exposed to difficulty or danger. This, however, is an unreasonable expectation, as it is opposed both to human experience and to the Divine testimony. Noah "walked with God," and was for

many years a preacher of righteousness to the men of his generation. Yet what an overwhelming affliction was brought upon him and his family! All were ordered to enter the ark, and there, together with a vast number of birds and beasts, were shut in by a Divine hand. The deluge came, and all flesh died. Noah and his family were the only human survivors in the midst of that wide-spread scene of desolation and Month after month did he remain in this fearful situation, floating on a sea without a shore; shut up in the ark with this multitude of living creatures; his stock of provisions daily growing less and less; and nothing but the word and providence of God on which to depend. What must have been the fears and anxieties of the holy man, while placed in these perilous circumstances! Our trials and afflictions may probably be considerable; but what are they, in comparison with his?

Much of the mercy of God toward His people is displayed in connection with their trials and afflictions. Provided we do but maintain a right spirit, and act in a proper manner, under them, the mercy of God is engaged to bring them all to a prosperous issue. "God remembered Noah;" and He remembered Job. and David, and Lazarus, and the number which no man can number, who have come "out of great tribulation." Believers sometimes express themselves in the language of despondency; but God cannot forget His people in any circumstances in which His providence may have placed them. When the Lord remembered Noah, his deliverance followed as a matter of course. All the suffering saints of God are remembered by Him, and shall be delivered in due time.

If Jesus is our Friend, He will never be far away from us, and always within call, though not visibly present. Messages can be sent to Him and returned again in an incredibly short space of time; and these

will bring Him to our assistance; for He is "nigh unto all that call upon Him." There may be indeed in the mind of the Saviour certain reasons for delay. unknown to ourselves, and this sometimes gives to His conduct the appearance of indifference and neglect; but deliverance, when delayed, is to be followed by a greater salvation: and if our afflictions are not removed, it is that they may be left to work out for us "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Earthly friends may be far away when their presence is needed most. In the hour of our extremity they may be beyond the sea, unable to leave their beds, or imprisoned in the grave itself; and we may call for their help, but call in vain. But nothing of this kind can happen in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. He ever lives, so He ever affords succour and salvation to His believing people; and He has said to every one of His friends, through all the vicissitudes of life and of death, "I will never leave thee."

AFFLICTION often takes us by surprise, and suddenly places us in new and unexpected circumstances; and in the midst of the hurry and bustle it occasions, we forget that Word of God which was intended to afford us guidance and consolation. Afterwards, when our thoughts have rallied, and we remember and understand what God has said, we are astonished and ashamed at ourselves.

Afflictions, when unconnected with the Word of God, resemble the preternatural darkness which came upon the land of Egypt: but "blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance." The most joyful sound in this world is that of the Word of God; and those who understand and remember and meditate upon that,—in the deepest night of affliction,—while all around is the blackness of darkness,—"shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy countenance."

Our great duty in the time of affliction is prayer. The Psalmist remembered the Word of God; and he began to entreat God to remember it too. This is the true province of prayer. Its business is with the promises. It puts God in mind of His promises, and pleads for their fulfilment. Such prayer has always been omnipotent. In every day of trial, adversity, and affliction, remember the promises; try to ascertain their meaning; and then go to God and plead for their fulfilment.

God indeed has not condescended to tell us how we shall be delivered. That He has reserved in His own power. But all His conduct proves that He is faithful to His promises. He cannot deny Himself. Therefore plead the promises. You shall prove that a reference to a Divine promise, and prayer for its fulfilment, will lead to glorious results.

V.

"Forget not all Mis Benefits."

INGRATITUDE is the besetting sin of fallen human nature. We are all prone to forget the kindness shown us by other people, and the consequent obligations under which we have been brought. Where is the man, for instance, who retains anything like an adequate recollection of the kindness of his own mother? —who remembers, as he ought to remember, her maternal anxieties, her nightly watchings, her daily toils, her liberality in supplying his wants, and her patience in enduring his perverseness and folly? owing to her kindness that he is not an idiot or a cripple, or that he did not sink into an untimely grave. If there are some who practically think a little of these things, facts demonstrate that it is but a little; and in many cases they are altogether forgotten. This is but a specimen of that ungrateful temper which prevails in the world, to a fearful extent. But if this is the temper we sometimes display towards men, surely we shall display another temper towards God; and if we forget their benefits, surely we shall not forget His benefits. It must indeed be admitted that we have forgotten many even of these, or we could not have acted as we have; but do not let us forget them all. At all events, let us think of this marvellous fact, that He "forgiveth all our iniquities."

Such a caution may almost appear unnecessary; for as Naaman, and the poor blind man mentioned by St. John, might forget many things, yet the one would hardly ever forget that he had bathed in the Jordan and been cured of his leprosy, nor the other that he had washed in the Pool of Siloam and received sight, so, a pardoned man will surely be unable to forget what great things the Lord has done for his soul. Yet it is written, "Be not high-minded, but fear," and "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall:" and it is impossible for us to comprehend the deceitfulness of sin. or to say how far a converted soul, by yielding to the devil, may become blinded and hardened by his power. St. Peter speaks of a man who had forgotten the fact of his having been once "purged from his old sins;" and this shows how necessary it is for us to charge our souls not to forget the infinite and eternal mercy of a present salvation.

VI.

Gratitude.

"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord."

BECAUSE a grateful temper is in exact accordance with the circumstances in which we are placed, with the character we sustain, and the situation we occupy

in the universe. We understand the value of harmony in a concert of music, and the painful sensation produced by the presence of a jarring string. Were the sun to shine, and the rain to fall, and no grass to be produced, there would be a blank in creation, and the order of things would be disturbed; but green and flowery fields agree admirably with the shining of the sun, and the fatness of the clouds, and tend to preserve the harmony and beauty of the material world, in all its richness and perfection. A spirit of affection and obedience in children and servants corresponds exactly with the benevolent authority of the parent and the master; and is calculated to cherish all that is contained in domestic comfort and the joys of home.

Now a spirit of thankfulness harmonizes exactly with the fact of our creation. What can be more suitable in a creature toward his Creator? It also agrees with that preserving care of God, exercised over us day by day: "for in Him we live and move." and upon Him we have been cast, even from our birth. For such blessings as these it is impossible to make a more answerable return than habitual gratitude and And this also agrees with the great facts of our redemption by Christ, and with the coming and influences of the Holy Ghost. Surely it is proper that we should love Him who has loved us at such a rate as this. An unthankful man is like a wheel out of place, in some complicated system of machinery; and he is a misery to himself, a hindrance to others, and an offence to his Maker. He is a limb out of joint; and there will be nothing but uneasiness until his heart is made right in the sight of God. The true spirit of holy gratitude is the element and principle of heaven itself. How is it that angels and glorified spirits are so happy? Simply because God is good, and they are thankful. Their spirit harmonizes with the benevolent conduct of God towards them; and this gives rise to all the blessedness of the glorified state.

> "On earth, in Paradise, in heaven, Our all in all is love."

When we have once learned to connect our mercies with God, we shall soon learn to connect our afflictions with Him too; for they are sent by the same Divine hand; they are blessings in another form; and are designed to attain the same end, by the use of different means.

VII.

Believers in the hand of Mercy.

"He that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about."—PSALM XXXII. 10.

THE prodigal had ceased to trust his father when he resolved to leave his home. He began to suspect that his father was selfish, rather than benevolent; and was governing with a reference to his own advantage, rather than to that of his child: that he entertained a secret wish to abridge the pleasures of his son, to hinder him from seeing the world, and doing the best he could for himself. The child, therefore, having lost all confidence in the wisdom and kindness of the father, as a natural consequence, demanded his fortune, left his home, and went into a far country. There he was placed in other circumstances, obtained other views, and was led to the adoption of other principles. He discovered, by a course of painful experience, that the true reason why his father wished to govern him was, because he was unable to govern himself; that he was advised to remain at home because, as his conduct had proved, he was unfit to go abroad; and that the gentle restraint to which he was subjected was intended, not to abridge his pleasures, but to save him from destruction. He now saw that he had never fared so well since he left his father's house, and that his wisest course was to go back to it again. As a proof of returning confidence in one whom he ought never to have distrusted at all, he resolved to go and cast himself at his father's feet, to confess his sin, and to seek the forgiveness which he needed. The gracious reception he met with so increased and confirmed the confidence of the son, that he felt no wish to leave such a father again, but became his grateful and devoted servant for ever.

We have all been prodigals in our time, and have shown a loss of all confidence in God by departing from His presence and from His ways. He who so "trusteth in the Lord" as to return to Him,—who has obtained His mercy, submitted to His government, and is resolved to abide with Him for ever,—"mercy

shall compass him about."

Still, while Christian believers feel that in the Divine treatment of them there is a great deal of mercy, many cannot be brought to see that it is all mercy, and that wherever they turn they meet with nothing else. . It is a mercy to be pardoned, a mercy to be delivered in danger, and it will be a mercy to be taken to heaven when we die; but what mercy, they ask, is there in being left to be persecuted for righteousness' sake? James and John perhaps could see but little mercy in the severe rebuke administered to them by their Master, when they came to complain of the treatment they had met with in a Samaritan village. good people are often persecuted and injured, and have no means of helping themselves. Yet there is much mercy in such a dispensation, whether they are able to see it or not. It is the wish of Christ that His people should possess those moral dispositions and habits which this treatment is likely to exercise and increase. We are to learn to love them that hate us, and to pray

for them that despitefully use us. Besides, John was afterwards sent to bestow the Holy Ghost on the Samaritans; and that was a far more glorious employment than bringing down fire from heaven to consume them. Christ's people are to be taught how to return good for evil, and to bestow the richest blessings on those from whom they have received only injury and abuse. Is there no mercy in forming men to such dispositions and habits as these? Why, these qualities of mind are the highest ornaments of human nature. Such people are the true children of God, imitators of their Father, and are sure to be associated with Him in the kingdom of His glory for ever.

It is not at all times that we can see the mercy included in a refusal to give us those earthly things which we think we need. Some good people profess indeed to be very modest in their views, and to be prepared to be satisfied with very little; but still they need a little more than they at present have. that little more God refuses to give; and they cannot see any mercy in that. The two sons of Zebedee desired Christ to allow them to sit in His kingdom. the one on His right hand and the other on His left; and perhaps could see no mercy in His refusing to grant so small a request. Yet it is quite possible that to have granted this request would have led them to prefer another of a similar kind, and that it was an act of mercy to nip the desire in the bud, by giving it no encouragement at all. St. Paul says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." There is a sense in which this is the only gain; for if it were possible for a man to gain the whole world, without godliness and contentment his mind would be just as empty and dissatisfied as it was before. It is therefore an act of unspeakable mercy, first of all to make us happy by giving us godliness and contentment, and then to give or withhold other things, just as may most conduce to the welfare of ourselves and others.

In time of affliction pious people pray, perhaps, in some degree, in the spirit as well as in the words of their Master, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Were the cup finally removed, they would see great mercy in that; but when it is, after all, put into their hands, and they are obliged to drink it to the very dregs, they can scarcely see in that any mercy at all. Peter at one time appears to have been under the influence of a similar feeling, when Jesus spoke of His approaching death; but our Lord showed the strongest disapprobation of the principles assumed by His mistaken disciple. He must be a short-sighted Christian who can see no mercy in affliction, and even in death itself. The death of Christ was an eternal mercy to all the human race. It was a mercy to Daniel and his companions, a mercy to the church, and a mercy to the world, that they were thrown, the one into a lions' den, and the others into a burning fiery furnace. We should never have been so benefited by their noble example, nor would they have become so glorious, had they not suffered as they did. Nor would the saints in glory have ever become what they now are, if they had not been made "perfect through suffering," and passed through death to their home in heaven.

So long as we trust and obey, whatever comes to us is mercy.

VIII.

Christian Contentment.

THERE is the most intimate connection between our present mercies, and God and heaven. If we separate them from Him, we deprive them of all their life and glory; viewed in connexion with Him, they appear unspeakably rich and glorious. However plain our food may be, it is the gift of our Father in heaven, a pledge

of His favour, and sweetened with His love. Poor raiment, and a mean habitation, may not in themselves appear very great; but these, and Christ and His salvation, are something of importance. God perhaps may not provide you a carriage to take you to heaven; but it will do if you can but get there on foot. Perhaps you may have but little of this world's good; but if you can have this, and the Holy Ghost, and a good conscience, at present, and then heaven after all, you must be grateful.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." The same blessedness was realized by St. Paul. He was satisfied in attending religious ordinances, because they were seasons of gracious intercourse with God. In the time of health and energy he was satisfied, because he was then promoting the honour of Christ and the happiness of men. As to necessities and afflictions, he took pleasure in them, because on their account the power of Christ was made more abundantly to rest upon him. When death itself approached, the apostle was still content, because he knew that "to depart, and to be with Christ" was "far better."

IX.

"In every thing give Thanks."

τ Thess. v. 18.

THE Gospel finds man a poor, selfish, worldly, and godless creature, and it proposes to transform him into a monument of piety and devotion; to fill him with gratitude and love; to constrain him to love the Lord with all his heart, and in every thing to give thanks. But this can be brought about only by the performance of a miracle, a constant miracle, that greatest of all miracles, referred to by the apostle.

when he says, "All things work together for good to them that love God." This is the great subject contemplated in these words. They were addressed to Christians, and perfectly agree with the great principles of our holy religion.

That the Gospel is meant to turn all the circumstances and events of life into one vast ultimate and spiritual blessing is here distinctly assumed. Christians are directed "in everything" to "give thanks;" or, as the apostle has elsewhere expressed it—still more distinctly and emphatically, "Giving thanks always for all things." But then, men are accustomed to give thanks only for blessings bestowed: they are not expected to be thankful for what is simply an injury and a loss. If we are invited to give thanks for all things, it is because all things are intended to result in a great benefit and salvation. Man is not merely God's creature, he is also a great sinner; but all the families of the earth are to be blessed in Christ. curse itself, which is the fruit of sin, is to be turned into a blessing, and all our sorrows and afflictions ultimately to become matter of thanksgiving to God. This subject, at times, in the hands of the tempter, has been rendered not a little perplexing to good That they should be thankful for pain and loss and poverty and sickness and death, appears to them unreasonable and impossible.

But in the Bible there are many instances in which great calamities have been turned into blessings, and from these we see how the same thing may be brought about on the largest possible scale, and in every case that can exist; for the gracious principle involved in them is of universal application. The Gospel contemplates a similarly glorious result in all those who embrace its offers and submit to its authority. St. John tells us that he heard a voice from heaven, saying unto him, "Write, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Now, nothing is more common than

death; for that comes alike to all. Certainly it required "a voice from heaven" to convince mankind that it was a happy thing to die. In general, that is regarded as the greatest of all calamities. To tell a human being that he is soon to die is the saddest intelligence it is possible to communicate. How can the dead be "blessed?" Both our senses and our reason suggest an opposite conclusion. Yet "a voice from heaven" has said, "Blessed are the dead." Not only was Enoch blessed, who was translated without seeing death: not only was Elijah blessed, who was conveyed to heaven in a chariot of fire: but blessed are the ordinary "dead," who pass by thousands out of the world, without notice, and are speedily forgotten,-provided they "die in the Lord." Then. the Christian is dismissed from his toils and his tears. and sent to reap the fruit of them all in an eternity of blessedness. On the same principle, and in the same manner, it is the gracious purpose of God, as announced in the Gospel, to cause all the events which befal His people to result in the richest benefits; and it is on this ground that they are directed to be grateful for them all.

This great design of mercy is to be carried into effect by the agency of God, operating in His own appointed way. It is to Him that we are directed "in every thing" to "give thanks," because He it is who by His gracious power causes every thing to result in our advantage and improvement. To turn the curse into a blessing is "the Lord's doing," and "marvellous in our eyes."

Yet this great work of God is not absolute, but conditional: this great benefit is not bestowed upon all indiscriminately, but upon those who have consented to be saved by Christ. Although conditional, however, it is altogether "of the Lord;" and to Him alone our thanksgivings are due. Jesus said to the ten lepers, "Go, shew yourselves unto the priests."

They accordingly set forward, and "as they went, they were cleansed." In this case the benefit bestowed was Had they refused to go to the priests, conditional. they had remained lepers still. But their cure, properly speaking, was not effected by any doings of theirs, but entirely by the power and grace of Christ; and the man acted right, and according to the facts and truth of the case, who, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and fell down at Jesus' feet, giving Him thanks. Just on the same principle, we must not live to the world and ourselves, but believe in Christ, and love God, and keep His commandments; or the various events of life will not result in our happiness and salvation. Whenever that is the case, it is not by any skill or efforts of our own, but by the power and grace of Him who is "wonderful in counsel." and "excellent in working." To God, therefore, our thanks are due; for to Him we are laid under boundless and endless obligation.

If, to true believers, every thing may thus be turned into blessing, then it is their privilege "in every thing" to "give thanks." "But how," say some, "can we be thankful for things which make our hearts to bleed, and our eyes to run down with tears? If we are silent and patient and quiet on such occasions, it is as much as can reasonably be expected." Still it is evident, from the Bible, that thankfulness in man is eminently acceptable to God. It is His unchangeable pleasure and purpose to produce this temper and habit in all His believing people; and to fill their hearts with this principle and feeling. amazing development of infinite and eternal love contained in the Gospel of Christ, God intends to empower and constrain us to love and thank Him. continually and for ever.

In order to this, it is not necessary, in any degree, to alter our outward circumstances. Our present trials and afflictions need not be either fewer or lighter.

All that is required is the bestowment of the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the office of that Spirit to assure the faithful of God's paternal love; and when human beings are in this manner thoroughly convinced and persuaded that God is their Father and their Friend,—that, when they are corrected, as well as when they are caressed, they are still the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,—their hearts are sure to swell and heave with gratitude and love. The Holy Ghost is also "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" and while musing on this astonishing subject the fire will burn, and, in the midst of outward trials and sorrows, we shall be constrained to speak with our tongues the praises of God.

In that sublime and eloquent discourse recorded in 1 Cor. xv. we find St. Paul anticipating the day when this mortal shall put on immortality; when death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed; and all things shall be put under the feet of Christ. Filled with gratitude at this glorious prospect, he exclaims, "Thanks be to God. which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet St. Paul was then in the midst of toils and tears, with the prospect of a life of privation, and a martyr's death. But his eye was fixed on God in Christ; and while gazing on His infinite wisdom and power and love, he saw that all things were tending to glory and honour and immortality; and he was constrained to "give thanks." Job says, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him." If people could not look on this great and good man without being filled with gratitude, neither can we turn our attention to God in Christ without being led "in every thing" to "give thanks."

You have heard of the philosopher's stone; receive Christ, and it will be yours.

X.

"An Old Bisciple."

Acts xxi. 16.

"THE hoary head," we are told, "is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." There are many things in an aged saint which are highly honourable to himself; but, above all, his character displays the glory of God. He is a noble monument of the power of Divine grace. All who consider and understand his case will be constrained to glorify God in Him.

We see the greatness of that mercy which made him "an old disciple," if we contrast his case with those who are like him in age, but not in moral character. · Is there a condition more truly pitiable than that of a person who is at once aged and wicked? Such would have been the case of this old disciple, had not Divine grace, by enlightening and converting him in youth, rescued him from the miseries of a guilty old age. His memory is not burdened with the remembrance of a life of worldliness and sin. He can look back upon the past without remorse; and more than this, Divine grace enables him to look forward to the future with joy. He takes a review of life, not with a lingering desire to live it over again, but satisfied with having finished the task assigned him, and that he is now about to be dismissed from the field of labour to his Master's house, to receive his reward. Like a weary traveller, after a fatiguing and hazardous journey, he is glad in heart at the prospect of his habitation and his home.

He has had, through life, occasional interviews with his Saviour, and these have kindled in his heart a fervent wish to see Him more distinctly, and to enjoy Him more fully; and now the time approaches when he is to depart, and be with Him.

The supply of the Spirit of Christ softens and

sweetens the temper; so that many an aged Christian is full of meekness and contentment. His faculties may decay, the drowsiness of death may gradually pervade his frame; but, amidst all this growing stupor, he knows, and those who love him have the consoling conviction, that he is falling asleep in Jesus.

"An old disciple" is an illustrious monument of Divine mercy, when compared with younger Christians. Some are disposed to think meanly of the cool and passive piety of an aged saint, as compared with the fervid affection and active zeal of youthful believers. But such would do well to remember that if these excel him in fervour, it is vet to be seen whether thev will equal him in perseverance. They have only just entered the vineyard; while he has borne the burden and heat of the day. They are only just leaving the starting post; whereas he is only a few steps from the winning post; and it is yet possible that their course may be finished in a manner very different from the way it was begun. Their perseverance is prophecy; but his is history. Theirs is what may be; his is what is. Everybody knows that there is no comparison between possibility and certainty. Be assured, such tried fidelity is noticed in heaven; and will receive the highest encomiums, and the richest rewards.

Consider the dangers "an old disciple" has escaped, and the afflictions he has endured. There was a time when he was involved in the guilt of sin, and all its destructive consequences; but he was awakened, converted, and saved. He is a miracle of mercy, a bird escaped from the fowler, a lamb taken out of the paws of the lion, a brand plucked out of the fire. was a time when he was harassed with temptation and opposition; he began to indulge a measure of unbelief and self-will; he grew weary and faint in his mind; the churches in heaven and earth were filled with anxiety on his account ;-but he waited on the Lord, he renewed his strength, and he went on his way rejoicing. At another time, his enemies came round him like wolves, and threatened to swallow him up; but his God taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight. At another stage of his progress, vast seas of trouble seemed to stretch themselves across his path. He was heard to say, in accents of the deepest affliction, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing." He seemed to sink for a while, but he rose again; and he passed secure the watery flood. Perhaps you look upon "an old disciple" with something of indifference; but if you consider his eventful life, your indifference will give way to esteem and admiration. What a depth of mercy, what an omnipotence of grace, is displayed in the past history of this wonderful man!

And that grace will appear still more illustrious if we turn to the future. A few more struggles, and the "old disciple" is in the Paradise of God. A few more fleeting hours, and those glorious declarations shall all be fulfilled in his experience:—"Where I am, there shall also my servant be." "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Oh, my young friend, when the evil days of old age come upon you,—as come they must, if your life be spared,—when your eyes are dim, your ears heavy, your hands and feet tremulous,—when your own generation, the friends of your youth, have been successively cut down, till of a very large forest you appear to be the only remaining tree;—when the axe is actually lying at your root, and you expect every hour to be brought to the ground, what would you not then give to have the reflections and the prospects of "an old disciple?" What a happiness would it then be to have the remembrance of a life spent in the service of Christ, to have a present consciousness of His favour, and the hope of being with Him for ever! And this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

PART SIXTH.

I.

Light in Barkness.

"As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone: and the place thereof shall know it no more."—Psalm ciii. 15, 16.

No man can look upon a dead body without inwardly asking, What has become of the soul? The soul is not here. Here is indeed the body; but it is without life, without feeling, and without intelligence. soul,—the vital, thinking principle, the man himself, is gone elsewhere. The question therefore again occurs, Whither has he gone? In the place he formerly occupied on earth, he will be seen and known no more. In what part of the universe, then, is his present home? and who are his friends and companions now? There is indeed a sentiment, a notion, a tradition, which has been entertained among men, in all parts and ages of the world, that when the body returns to the dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it. vital and intellectual principle which is in man then goes back to that great Source of life and intelligence from which it originally proceeded. Still, the whole subject is involved in impenetrable mystery and gloom. To what part of the universe does the soul go, when it returns to God who gave it? God is everywhere, and surrounds us continually; and we cannot escape from His presence. What is then the mode or manner of its existence? If that existence is distinct and separate, how is the soul to perform its various operations without the aid of the bodily organs, on which,

in the present state, it is entirely dependent?

Another opinion, which has generally prevailed, is, that man is a responsible being, and that his death will be followed by some inquiry into his conduct. Solomon has embodied this common sentiment in appropriate language, when he tells us that "God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil." Then, again, it is a settled principle that "the judgment of God is according to truth," nor can it be denied that every man is, in fact, a sinner, and therefore the tribunal of God has always been anticipated with anxiety and alarm. It is the consideration of that judgment, and the solemn consequences to which it may possibly lead, which has always made death "the king of terrors" to man.

From this condition of gloom and uncertainty human nature has never been able to extricate itself. have heard indeed of persons who have seen and conversed with spirits returned from the invisible and eternal world; but if even we admitted all these reports to be true, still these visits have been few and far between; they have been very transient in their duration; none of them has thrown any useful light upon that world to which we are hastening; and men have been left to inquire, to wonder, and to tremble, as they had ever done before. We may study the case of all the past generations of mankind; but all that we know of them is, that the wind has passed over them, and they are gone; and the place that once knew them shall know them no more. But we cannot know this without surmising a great deal more. and a great deal of what is inexpressibly awful and momentous, and calculated to fill our minds with the deepest seriousness and solicitude.

That information respecting man which could never be obtained by merely studying his circumstances has

been freely communicated by the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. It is by the Gospel that we are made acquainted with the true cause of our mortality, and of all the pain and sorrow with which it is connected. There we read that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Adam was the federal head, and the covenant representative of all his posterity. Whether he stood or fell, obeyed or 'disobeyed the Divine commands, all his posterity were implicated in his conduct, and made to share in its When he fell, all men fell with him: and when it was said to him, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return," we were all involved in his "In Adam all die," not only those intelligent adults who wilfully and deliberately sin, "after the similitude of Adam's transgression," and thereby strictly merit the threatened punishment; but the young, the ignorant, and the inexperienced, -who, when they do wrong, are to be pitied as well as blamed,—sorrow and die in the same way. Nay, even children and infants are subjected to the same law of mortality, with all its attendant sorrows. "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It passed upon those who never sinned by any will or act of their own, and who indeed are incapable of personal guilt; but they had sinned in and with him who is their common head and representative.

By the Gospel also we are made acquainted with the doctrine of the Redeemer. There is another federal Head, a second covenant Representative of the human race. We are benefited by the righteousness of the one, as we have been injured by the sin of the other. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous:" and as by one man came death, so by another Man came the resurrection from the dead; for "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Of this He has given the pledge and

the earnest in the fact of His own resurrection. As the gathering of the first-fruits was followed by that of the entire harvest, so the resurrection of Christ will be followed by that of the entire human race.

It is the office and design of Christ not merely to restore our dead bodies to life, but to render that life eminently holy and happy. This is the result of a present salvation from sin. Repentance and faith arise out of a knowledge of Christ, and a due consideration of His character and undertaking.

TT.

Reath Risarmed.

"And they crucified Him there."

While the circumstances of our Lord's crucifixion are highly interesting and important, it is the event itself which most of all demands our attention, because we are dying creatures ourselves, and the death of Christ involves a provision for our most urgent neces-Man is a subject of moral government. There is a Divine law which he is obliged to keep. God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret There is a time coming when the mind will awake, and we shall see these circumstances of our existence in all their solemnity and importance. Moses, when lamenting the dreadful mortality that prevailed among the Israelites in the wilderness, says to his Maker, "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." When the sun shines into a room we sometimes see innumerable particles of dust which had before escaped our observation. At the near approach of death the light of eternity beams upon our past life, and discovers sins which we had forgotten or failed to notice. It is true there is no power in sickness or death to

teach a man anything he did not know before. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But many who have heard of the claims of God, and of their responsibility to Him, disregard these lessons until the approach of death. Even eminent saints, when placed in these solemn circumstances, have discovered moral defects in their character which have occasioned the deepest self-abasement. Who is to meet the demands of a holy God, to silence the clamours of an awakened conscience, and to hush our fears to rest? Only the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. As we must soon be placed in these affecting circumstances,—and it must then be all our hope and all our plea, "For me the Saviour died,"—it is our wisdom at present to

fix our attention upon this great subject.

In the death of Christ there is an example proposed for our imitation; and when our sins are forgiven, we are prepared to follow His steps. Jesus was not compelled to die. His death was altogether voluntary. Still, it was His Father's will that He should lav down His life "for the sheep," and give Himself "a ransom for all." Yet the human nature of Jesus abhorred, suffering and death quite as much as our own. He instinctively shrank from the shame of a public execution, and from the horrors of crucifixion. But He submitted to His Father's will, and even awaited it with alacrity and joy. Our own death is matter not of choice, but of necessity. Were the matter left to our own decision, we should for ever evade the season of sickness, and the hour of mortality. But we may attain to the habit of resignation. We may, by grace, become willing to suffer and to die. This is even easy after our sins have been forgiven. Nay, in this way we may even feel a desire "to depart, and to be with Christ." Perfect resignation is the fruit only of our Redeemer's death. Many things may induce us to say, "Thy will be done," when God offers to give us life, and all that earth can afford; but it is only faith in the blood of Christ which will enable us to say, "The will of the Lord be done," when He bids us

step aside and die.

The death of Christ also involves a prospect into our future state. That is indeed a dark and dismal vale which lies between mortal and immortality. We follow our friends into this valley, and then they pass into midnight darkness, and we can see them no more. Our poet has described the state into which they pass as

"A land of deepest shade, Unpierced by human thought."

But,

"See, ye sinners, see! the flame, Rising from the slaughter'd Lamb, Marks the new, the living way, Leading to eternal day."

While you fix your attention steadily on the death of Christ, and as you come to understand the mystery and meaning of His passion, light from heaven breaks upon the midnight darkness, the prospect brightens, and you can,

> "Beyond the bounds of time and space, Look forward to that heavenly place, The saints' secure abode."

What did Jesus Himself say on the subject of His own death? He called it His departure in the character of the Forerunner of His people, to make arrangements for their reception, as they were expected to follow in due time. He gives us to understand that this act of reception to Himself refers to the separation of the soul from the body, and that we enter into His presence at the time of our death. To meditate on the death of Christ is to "climb where Moses stood," and view the land of promise in its length and breadth.

God has been so gracious to many of our dying friends that we almost take it as a matter of course, and conclude that people generally are happy when they sicken and are about to die. We may, however, rest assured that triumph over death is altogether gracious and supernatural. All our worldly affairs may be arranged according to our wishes; we may be surrounded by the kindest friends, and the most valued earthly advantages; but none of these, nor all of them together, will ever give us any thing like consolation in suffering and hope in death. Before a single blast of mortal sickness earthly comforts and advantages will wither and fade, like leaves and flowers amid the frosts of autumn, and we shall find nothing to give us inward peace amid pain, or to open heaven to our view when our limbs are growing cold by the silent advances of death. But the Gospel has again and again vielded these extraordinary and miraculous fruits.

Let no person imagine that he may with propriety neglect the death of Christ because his own death at present appears to be a very distant event. It is true this change in our condition may be far off; it is equally true that it may be near at hand. Whether it is near or distant, it is our wisdom to "behold the Lamb of God." If we are to die soon, we should do well to prefer the cross of Christ to all earthly things. If we are to live long, then the present is our time of preparation. It is by schools and apprenticeships that children acquire that information they are likely afterwards to need. In health we are to prepare for sickness; and in the midst of life we are to get ready for death. It is not by thinking of our own death, or of the death of our friends, but of the death of Christ, that we are to become wise and good.

III.

Aften Beath.

"I go to prepare a place for you."
"I will come again, and receive you unto myself."—
John xiv. 2, 3.

DEATH is that mighty and terrible stroke which rends asunder hearts that had long been united ____h blasts the hopes of the ambitious, withers the glory of the vain, scatters the treasures of the miser, and brings down the proud even to the dust. While this dreadful power throws down all that is present into absolute and hopeless ruin, it sheds no light at all upon the future. After death has passed upon the greatest of men, all that is left is a handful of dust. all that is to come is involved in gloom. discourses generally accord with the character of their subject. They speak of a glory which is departed, of a power which is no longer felt, of riches which have passed into other hands, of that which was once a mighty and a glorious something, but of which now nothing is left but a name and a shadow.

But death and funerals are placed in a very different light when they are made the subject of a discourse delivered by the Son of God. It is our wisdom at all times to listen to the words of Christ; but we should especially do this on funeral occasions. Whoever would understand the subject of death must sit with Mary at the Master's feet, and listen with earnest attention to the words which proceed out of His

mouth.

Our Lord's teachings refer to that view of death in reference to which we were in most need of information. We knew that man's nature was compounded, consisting of an animal body and an intelligent principle, and that these were separated by the stroke of death; but, although we could easily ascertain what became of the one, we were totally in the dark as to what befel the other. On this obscure subject the Redeemer has poured a flood of light; and from what He has said, and from what we ourselves know, we are enabled to conclude that this great act of separation gives rise to two trains of circumstances, in many

respects the reverse of each other.

When death has passed upon one of our friends, the soul departs, but the body remains. There are the limbs and the features, and perhaps some of the former expression in the countenance: but where is the intelligent principle that actuated the whole? It is gone. But whither is it gone? It is gone, Christ says, to the place where He, its forerunner, has gone before. A funeral takes place on earth; but a festival is celebrated in heaven. Here nothing is to be heard but adieus and farewells; nothing is felt but the pangs of separation; nothing is seen but the habiliments of mourning, and countenances marked with sorrow and bedewed with tears. But the soul is gone where there are only greetings and welcomes, and all the demonstrations of a universal and unmingled joy. There the servant meets his Master; and while the one gives an account, the other bestows a gracious reward. Fellow-servants, actuated by one principle and labouring in one cause, but long separated by seas and centuries, are permitted to meet at last. Guardian angels congratulate the disembodied spirit on her safe arrival in the Paradise of God.

The soul is admitted into the presence of Christ, for it is prepared a celestial mansion, an apartment in "the palace of angels and God;" but the body is put away from the society of men, and consigned to the dark and dismal grave. The disembodied soul, sanctified by grace, is immortal, lovely, prepared as a bride adorned for her Lord; and is therefore received into His family and His home. But the poor corruptible

body must be borne away from its home and its companions, and be buried out of their sight; there to lie, forsaken and forgotten, until the resurrection of the just.

But this wide, this immeasurable distance will not always continue. The soul and the body have been

one, and they shall be one again.

The condition of the saints before death and after it is so widely different that it might seem, at the first view, as if they were treated on different principles, and for different purposes. Old age and its infirmities are often connected with disease and suffering: wearisome days and tiresome nights succeed each other. until life sometimes becomes a burden. All this is witnessed and all this is appointed by the same Jesus who has gone to prepare a place for His people, and will soon receive them to Himself. It is the same love which corrects us on the bed of death, and crowns us in heaven with eternal life. Jesus Himself was made "perfect through sufferings:" and there is a sense in which His people must all be made perfect in the same way. On account of our sin we have merited that hell which is "the second death;" and we must, by tasting of temporal death, be made to understand, in some small degree, from what it is that Christ has delivered us. The servants of Christ are to be glorified with Him; but we are never perfect servants until we are obedient unto death, and can say to our Master, even when He bids us endure the agonies of dissolving nature, "Thy will be done."

Jesus appears to be the Sun and Centre of redeemed spirits in heaven, round which they all revolve, and from which they derive their light and their glory. They enter the eternal world by a path which has been previously trodden by Christ. A place for them is prepared by Christ. The promise is that they shall be met and received by Christ. The New Testament knows nothing of a heaven separate from Christ. In time, and through eternity, He is our all in all.

To identify himself with Christ is therefore the completest wisdom that man can evince.

IV.

"Believe also in Me."

John xiv. 1.

LET us notice the influence of this habit of mind upon our views of the future; for we cannot forget that here we have "no continuing city." But then we are told by an apostle that "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." We are equally ignorant both of the place and character of our future abode. The earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, taken to pieces, and deserted by its intelligent and immortal inhabitant; but whither has it fled? Is the departed soul now a welcome guest, a child at home, a friend among kindred spirits? Has it gained a happier climate, and a nobler life? All we can say is, it has gone—gone to the place from whence it shall not return.

Here we begin to feel the importance of the direction contained in these words, and are obliged to fall back upon the character and work of God the Father and God the Son. Our immortal spirits have been sent into this world, and accommodated with an earthly abode, to which they are become closely united and tenderly attached. Here we have light for the eyes, an atmosphere to breathe, and the earth gives us bread to eat; besides other means of enjoyment, in boundless abundance and endless variety. Respecting our future abode, Jesus says, "I go to prepare a place for you. . . I will come again and receive you unto myself." Redemption is the most signal and complete development of God's essential goodness. "Herein is love." There is love in creation, love in Providence.

but it is as nothing compared with this. The blessings of redemption are so transcendent and surpassing that, as compared with them, the glories of the material universe shall be no more remembered, nor come into mind. Already our immortal spirits are provided with an "earthly house" and "tabernacle;" but Jesus has prepared for them hereafter a "house which is from heaven." This, in many respects, is a desirable world; but Jesus has prepared for His people "a better country." Well, therefore sight He say, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me:" for if we thoroughly consider the nature and ends of His mediation, we shall not be unwilling to pass from the embodied to the disembodied state; knowing that however good it is to be here, "to depart, and to be with Christ" is "far better."

This habit of mind will reconcile us to the company with whom we are likely soon to mingle. The disembodied state is not a solitary but a social condition. Jesus here says, "In my Father's house are many mansions." As in the temple at Jerusalem there were many courts and chambers, so that, while in one respect it was a house, in another it was a city in itself; so, in the state of separated souls there is a number, "which no man could number," redeemed unto God, out of every nation. These, too, are a sanctified people, all filled with light and love. They have received the Spirit of Christ, and learned to walk as He also walked. They resemble the disciples, not when they disputed "who should be the greatest," but when they were baptized with the Holy Ghost, and became "of one heart and of one soul." There are all the moral excellencies of the primitive church, without any of its infirmities and sins; for that is "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

With all this moral goodness is associated the highest dignity, the sagest wisdom, the most varied experience;

for there are prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and confessors, and all the servants of Jesus who were "faithful unto death." Saints there have passed the fire, and lost their dross, and now exhibit all the brilliance of a pure and perfect love. So that to enter on the disembodied state is to pass from the church militant to the church triumphant, to emerge out of darkness into day, to exchange the conversation of children for that of men and of sages. It is to enjoy the presence of Moses and Elias, not for a few hours, but for ever. It is to "sit down," and remain "with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God."

All this excellence and glory is derived from Christ, and by considering Him, we are led more and more to love this happy community. We cannot become thoroughly acquainted with Him without thinking highly of them; for they are His workmanship. They are actuated by His Spirit, are images of Himself, and an honour to His name; and the more we consider Him, the more willing and desirous we shall be to occupy one of these mansions, and to mingle with "the spirits of just men made perfect."

This habit of mind will fill us with new and celestial affections. The place to which the spirits of our departed friends retire is here characterized as the "house" of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; it is the home of the heavenly family, and of course both the Father and the Son are especially and permanently there. While a consideration of the character of Christ will reconcile us to our future abode, and to our expected companions, it will especially inflame our hearts with an ardent love to Him, and an intense desire to see and enjoy Him for ever.

We often wonder at the victorious faith which was exemplified by many of the early Christians. Because this was evinced on occasions of great trial, we are apt to suppose that the one was the effect of the other, and that we cannot attain to the same faith unless we

are placed in the same circumstances. But we may have the faith of Stephen without his martyrdom. was not because false witnesses were procured to testify against him, nor because his judges gnashed with their teeth, rushed upon him, and hurried him away to be stoned to death :- it was not by all this brutal rage and violence that he was enabled to say, "I see heaven opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." This was the result of his attending to the advice here given us. Long before, he had turned his attention to Christ, and had seriously considered His undertaking The longer he looked, the brighter his and designs. prospect became. He saw that Jesus was the brightness of the Father's glory; that in His presence is "fulness of joy;" and that this Jesus was standing at the right hand of God, and waiting to receive his departing spirit.

Christ is all and in all. If we will but follow His direction when He says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me," our prospect of heaven will grow brighter and brighter. We shall have the martyr's hope with-

out the martyr's sorrows.

V.

"Present with the Land"

2 Cor. v. 8.

THESE words convey to us the idea of an intellectual world, and of mental occupation and excitement. Whatever heaven may be in other respects, if it gave no suitable employment to the active mind of man, it would fail to meet his case, and would be unable to afford him true satisfaction. It would be a great privation to leave this world, bad as it is, if there was not another, made by the same God, and equally suited to the immortal mind of man. The inhabitants

of heaven find pleasure in employment; and their thoughts are full of God, while they serve Him day and night in His temple. When Moses and Elijah met with our glorious Redeemer on the Mount of Transfiguration, and Peter exclaimed, "It is good to be here," they were all occupied with the great work of saving the world. The subject of discourse was the death of Christ, together with its nature, purpose, and probable results. Nor did the inhabitants of heaven evince less interest in the commencement of the redeeming scheme.

At this day, Christ is busy carrying out the designs of His mediatorial kingdom. Angels are His servants: and they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." If the people of this country feel such an interest in its political affairs, how much more anxious must disembodied spirits be to know what Christ is doing in the way of putting down all rule and authority and power opposed to His own. Never imagine, for a moment, that to die is merely to be buried in some place, and know nothing more but about "corruption, earth. and worms." To be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord." To die is to enter an intellectual world, where all is activity and life. is to "see the King in His beauty." It is to watch the development of infinite wisdom and goodness. is to be constrained by facts to cry out, "Just and true are Thy ways, thou King of saints!" When Joseph was sold by his brethren a slave into Egypt. he was not aware of the honours which awaited him Had he foreseen his advancement in the house of Potiphar, and his subsequent elevation to be the first minister in a great kingdom, and the saviour of a multitude of people, he would have cheerfully submitted to the treatment he received, harsh and cruel as it was. Nor will you think it an unmingled calamity to grow old and die, or imagine that thoughts about another world are unsuited to the young, if you seriously consider and fully understand these words, that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord."

VI.

"To die is gain."

When life has been a service done to Christ, death will be a blessing conferred upon ourselves. He who can say truly, "To me to live is Christ," may confidently add, "to die is gain." The apostle did not intend to intimate that a Christian gains nothing in life. That would be contrary to fact. He has elsewhere stated that a Christian gains what is unspeakably glorious and important in this life; but still this, however great in itself, is as nothing compared with what he obtains after death. For instance:—

1. A believer in Christ obtains in this world the pardon of his sins. Did you ever taste the wormwood and the gall, the distress of soul arising from a conviction that God was angry with you? If you have, you will form an idea of what a man gains when he hears the voice of mercy, when his mind is set at rest, and he is fully persuaded that God is reconciled to Him through the death of His Son. But if it is such an unspeakable blessing to have an evidence of the Divine favour here,—an evidence which, however sweet and satisfactory in itself, is still liable to be assaulted by our own erring reasonings and the suggestions of Satan, and to become clouded by unfaithfulness,what must it be to have such an evidence as heaven can afford, to be as fully assured as we are of our own being that God is ours and we are His for ever? If it is such a blessing to have a distant prospect of heaven, a dawning hope that, years hence, we may be admitted to its blessedness, what must it be to be there in

reality, to feel that death is past, and heaven is our own for ever? It is an unspeakable mercy to be rescued from hell, to have our prison doors thrown open, and be restored to liberty and life;—but to be sent for to Court, to be ushered into the royal presence, to behold the Saviour's glory, and dwell with Him for ever, this will be such a transcendent blessedness as will make us acknowledge that "to die is gain."

2. A believer in Christ obtains in this life a degree of knowledge. When a man loves God, he wishes to know what He has said and what He has done. he reads His word, and studies His works. piety naturally awakens his intellectual energies, puts his thoughts in motion, promotes inquiry, and expands and elevates his mind. Not that religion makes every man a scholar;—that is impossible, in the nature of the thing;—but it is the parent of knowledge, it improves every mind it enters, and renders a man wiser than he otherwise would have been. But what is all the knowledge which can be acquired here, compared with what will be obtained after our dismission from the body? Disembodied saints are denominated "the spirits of just men made perfect." They are men; we are in a state of childhood. Reason and revelation are a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our path; but a traveller would know very little of the beautiful trees and fields, the lofty mountains and flowing rivers he might pass, if he only saw them by the light of a lamp on a dark night. Such is the dim and indistinct view which mortals have of the wonderful works of God; but in heaven they are seen in the meridian light of eternity, and therefore distinctly and fully. Whenever the bandage of flesh shall be taken away from your eyes, and the wonders of heaven and earth shall be discovered to the view of your enraptured spirit, you will acknowledge that "to die is gain."

3. The victories a believer obtains in this world are

many and glorious. He resists the devil, and he flees from him; he breaks his bad habits, and they prevail over him no more; he rises above the cares and allurements of the world, and lives a holy life. Afflictions come upon him like a flood; death approaches: but his heart is stedfast, trusting in the Lord. are important conquests; but they are obtained with great difficulty. The conflict is often tremendous: the enemy, when driven back, rallies again; the battle is renewed over and over. But in death he has the last struggle with the last enemy, and his victory is final and complete. Formerly he was looked upon as a brave and successful warrior; but still the issue of the battle hung in doubt. Now it is gloriously and for ever decided. Now he is proclaimed a triumphant conqueror, and the crown is put upon his head. he has overcome, and sits with Christ on His throne. even as He overcame, and has sat down with His Father upon His throne. This is to conquer in reality. This is victory indeed.

4. A real Christian is a truly honourable man. He who loves his God, to a certain extent will live in the esteem of his fellow-men. For moral excellence must command their respect; while gentleness and kindness of temper win their affection. But what are these things compared to the honour of hearing the Saviour say, "Well done," and of being admitted a member of the general assembly and church of the first-born? To be approved of men, and enjoy their confidence and esteem is an honour; but to be approved of God, to associate with prophets and apostles and saints and martyrs, to be hailed by them as a fellow-servant and a brother, this is honour indeed. However a man may have been exalted here, yet if to die is to be honoured thus, then "to die is gain."

5. True religion leads to habits of economy and industry, it brings down the blessing of God upon our persons and concerns, and hence it is a very common

thing for real Christians to enjoy a larger share of worldly comforts than their ungodly neighbours who on the whole are in the same circumstances. even by no means an uncommon thing to see religious people, by the mere force of moral principle, under the blessing of Almighty God, gradually rise to the possession of what is called property, in various degrees. But when obliged to bequeath his wealth to others, a Christian receives in exchange for it "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth. neither moth corrupteth." Here, he no doubt finds, as many others have done before him, that property is a troublesome and dangerous, as well as a very useful thing. There, he will be rich in those things compared with which gold and silver, houses and land, are nothing better than pebbles or straws, or the toys of children. Whatever he has to leave, he loses nothing, but finds that "to die" is infinite "qain."

6. Every true believer possesses much happiness even in this life, but his happiness here is mixed. He is liable to be injured by man, and assaulted by the Disappointments and reverses befal him. Sin has put a bitter cup into his hand; and although God has mingled it with sweets, yet it may not pass from him, he must drink it. But by dying he gains a bliss unmingled, and without alloy. For then "God shall wipe away all tears" from his eyes. His happiness here is limited. Whatever he feels at any period of his life is but a ray of that celestial light, a drop from that fountain. But, says the Psalmist, "in Thy presence is fulness of joy." There God communicates without restraint: and it is impossible to conceive the extent of His love, or to utter the exceeding riches of His grace. We must die to comprehend, as well as to enjoy, the blessedness of heaven; but be assured, whenever you are admitted to behold that glory, you will acknowledge "to die is gain."

VII.

"The Karnest of our Inheritance." Eph. i. 14.

There are a thousand things connected with the invisible and eternal world which the human mind in vain attempts to penetrate; and this sometimes awakens within us no little anxiety. But God having given to us the promise of eternal blessedness, in order to sustain our minds amidst the obscurity with which the subject is beset, causes us to taste of the word of life, and to feel the powers of the world to come. Wherever the Holy Spirit comes, He brings heaven with Him; and His presence in the soul is glory begun below. The celestial dove brings to the faithful the leaves of the tree of life, and enables them to taste the fruits of Paradise, and to drink of those pleasures which are at God's right hand.

VIII.

The Resurrection.

"The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever."—
1 Peter i. 24, 25.

THE Gospel is the foundation of our hope in the resurrection of the human body. That is a beautiful, but essentially a fading flower. Go, take your stand in one of our public burial grounds. Look around you in all directions. Think of the persons whose remains are deposited there: think what they once were, and what they now are. A few years ago they were all alive and in health; full of activity, and blooming in youth and beauty. Some of them possessed superior excellencies and endowments. They were intelligent

and industrious, learned and ingenious, wealthy and prosperous; invested with rank and office; admired, esteemed, and honoured, in a thousand different ways. What are they now? They are dust and ashes. Many of them are already forgotten; and the rest will not be remembered long. The grass has withered. The flower has faded. The transient glory has vanished away.

Some of these were blighted by a wind; some of them were attacked by a worm at the root; and some of them lived on through their appointed summer, strangely sheltered from accident and disease. the autumn came at last, when a process of decay began, which silently, slowly, and surely went on till it had brought them to the ground. The generations of mankind who flourished in former ages have all perished in the same way. They lived as long, and promised as fair. They were equally magnificent and glorious; but the grass has withered, the flower has faded; all have disappeared, and not a single plant survives. Other generations, of course, will perish in the same way. What has happened so often will assuredly happen again. "All flesh is grass." It is all fair, and all beautiful; but all doomed to fade and to die.

Let none of us attempt to practise a delusion upon our own souls by saying, "My friends tell me I am physically formed for longer life than many others." Flatterers sometimes tell people that they have the constitutional firmness of an oak, that they were born to live for many years, and that no adverse circumstances are likely to make any serious impression upon them. Strange to say, there are parties who, by such representations as these, are deluded into a practical denial of their own mortality; and accordingly talk and act, not like persons who are expecting to die soon, but rather like men who are never likely to die at all. The Author of the Bible is the Maker of Taxon.

and He knows what man is; and He is the God of truth, and cannot misrepresent the state of our case; and He speaks to each of us,—to those who have the very best and strongest physical constitution,—and He tells each that he is not an oak, but a blade of grass; not a tree, intended to grow for centuries, but a flower, which is essentially short-lived, and liable to a thousand accidents. There may be a difference in physical constitution; but it is only the difference between grass and grass, and between flower and flower.

"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth,"—and what then? The summer is ended, the autumn and the winter have come; is there to be no succeeding spring? The leaves are fallen to the ground, the flowers are faded and gone, the stalk itself has decayed, no part of the plant is to be seen; but what has become of the root? Is that perished, too? or is there some sap and vitality remaining there, which, at the proper time, will cause the grass to spring and to live again? Job tells us there is "hope of a tree, if it be cut down;" for there is a principle of vitality in the root, and it will "sprout again?" Is there any root or principle in his nature by which dead bodies, like flowers in spring, shall revive and flourish a second time?

It has been supposed by some that there is such a germ or principle in human nature, so that, by a purely natural process, somewhat like the development of a seed or root in the earth, dead bodies shall be restored to life; but this seems to be a mere conjecture, unsupported by any satisfactory evidence. All the tendencies of nature at present appear to be in an opposite direction; so that mere philosophy would conduct to an opposite conclusion. St. Paul tells us that there will be a resurrection; but at the same time intimates that its probability does not rest upon any laws of nature, but upon the omnipotence of

Christ, who is able to control, to alter, and to reverse any or all of these laws. He will raise and glorify our bodies, because He is able to counteract all the tendencies of nature, and to mould and bend them to His own purpose and pleasure.

Still, the Gospel contains the express promise of a God has said the dead shall rise again. resurrection. That word is an incorruptible seed. It cannot perish: but will survive all the changes incident to earthly things. Heaven and earth may pass away; but the word of God cannot pass away. It must be fulfilled in all its latitude of meaning.

The deliverance of the people of Israel out of Egypt was the subject of a promise which God made to Abraham. That promise, however, remained inactive. like a dormant seed, for the space of four hundred years. But when the time for its fulfilment drew near, it began to put forth all its vitality and omnipotence; and at length resulted in all the magnificent events connected with the passage through the Red Sea, the overthrow of the power of Egypt, and the emancipation of the Jewish people.

The promised resurrection of the dead is to take place at some future and probably yet distant period. It is to be associated with mighty and fearful changes in all earthly things. These changes God will effect by the agency of fire. The elements shall melt with fervent heat; the sea shall be absorbed; the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up: the present heavens shall pass away with a great noise; while out of this general conflagration and ruin there shall arise "a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." It is in connexion with these great and solemn events that the promise of the Gospel respecting the resurrection of man shall take effect, and the human dead, small and great, shall rise up, and stand before God. All flesh is as gross, and "the grass withereth, the flower fadeth;" but we know this course of things will not go on for ever. The word and promise of God is an incorruptible seed. It may lie dormant for ages; but it cannot perish. It is for ever full of force and vitality. At the appointed time it will be unfolded in all its omnipotence and glory; and by its energy and operation these bodies of ours, these faded, fallen flowers, shall

"Revive with ever-during bloom, Safe from diseases and decline."

TX.

The Christian Believer's Prospect.

"We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."—Phil. iii. 20, 21.

Jesus has entered heaven as our Forerunner and Representative, taken possession of it in our nature, and on our account. He has further pledged Himself to return to earth "with power and great glory;" not only for the purpose of judging mankind, and destroying His enemies, but chiefly to gather His people together, and place them in the presence of God. Those who have received from Him the forgiveness of sin and the renewal of their nature, are justified in expecting the accomplishment of all His promises. Accordingly we expect His return, from the experience we have already had of His faithfulness, and of His ardent and unchangeable attachment to His people. Unlike the mutable children of men, who generally become giddy when placed on an eminence, and forget, in the time of their elevation and prosperity, their friends and companions in adversity, He "ever liveth to make intercession for us," and confers blessings on us every day. Indeed it seems as if heaven itself could scarcely be a heaven without His believing

people; for how can the head be happy, unless the body is united and complete? His love forbids His forgetting His people; and His faithfulness binds Him to come again, and receive them unto Himself.

These bodies, degraded by sin and death, He shall "change," and shall fashion "like unto His glorious body." We are not at present acquainted with all the properties of our Saviour's glorified humanity; therefore, though we know we shall be like Him, we cannot fully tell what sort of bodies we shall then possess. Nor is this necessary. It is sufficient to know that then we shall be immortal. Our present bodies are subjected to the curse, in consequence of their connexion with the first Adam; but our future bodies, derived from the grace of the second Adam, will be exempt from the effects of this dreadful denunciation. Hence they will be incapable of dissolution or decay; full of immortal life, their vigour shall never diminish, nor their beauty fade away.

Our future bodies will also doubtless be perfectly convenient to ourselves. Here we often labour under oppressive languor, are soon wearied and compelled to suspend our devotional exercises. This earthly tabernacle frequently proves a clog and a prison to the soul. But when made like unto Christ's glorious body, it will become so refined and spiritual as to be a suitable abode for a spirit glowing with intense love to God, and with a sleepless desire to do His will. We shall move with all the speed of angels, be superior to fatigue, and be qualified to bear a part in the ceaseless worship of heaven.

But the glorified body of a saint will be as delightful to others as to himself. It is said that when Jesus was transfigured, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment became white as the light;" and the bodies of His people will doubtless exhibit the same transcendent beauty, and shine with the same ineffable glory. Such a surprising work is not impracticable with our

Almighty Saviour. It is every way suitable to that boundless energy whereby He is able "to subdue all things to Himself." It is not too much to expect that He will redeem the pledge He has given to His people. Let us, however, carefully remember that this energy will never be exerted in glorifying our bodies unless it is here permitted to sanctify our souls. If the Spirit of Jesus "dwelleth in us," as an Enlightener and Purifier, and as the principle of a moral and spiritual life, then He shall also quicken our mortal bodies.

Can the Christian, then, ever be indifferent to his glorious prospects? We are expecting to see Jesus, to be like Him, and to be with Him for ever. We cannot think of that day too much. It will cheer us in trial. animate us to diligence, and reconcile us to death. When we lie on a sick bed, and feel ourselves just on the point of falling to pieces, no wonder the flesh should involuntarily shrink. But then it is impossible for us to be glorified in our present state. Our earthly house, as it is at present constituted, cannot stand for ever; and if it be taken down, it is in order that it may be rebuilt with greater strength, symmetry, and beauty. Why then this extravagant attachment to life, and this unconquerable reluctance to die? Is it not the offspring of unbelief? Did we fully believe in the Saviour, and had we that plenary consciousness of our acceptance with Him, that "full assurance of hope" which the Gospel offers to us, we should meet death with sentiments of confidence and triumph, and not of hesitation and dismay,—not as an evil, but as the harbinger of immortal blessedness. "Full of immortal hope," we should

> "urge the ceaseless strife, And hasten to be swallowed up Of everlasting life."

X.

"That they may behald My glary."

THAT "glory," probably, denotes not so much any visible brightness and splendour as that moral grandeur which will invest the character of Jesus, and which arises from the development of His purposes, the fulfilment of His promises, and the execution of His designs of infinite wisdom and love. here speaks of that ineffable love and unity which had subsisted between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world. Their counsels and purposes, then formed, were to be developed in time, and contemplated by the faithful throughout the ages of eternity. When the three disciples accompanied their Master to the Mount of transfiguration, they said, "Lord, it is good to be here;" and yet the redeeming scheme was but very partially unfolded then, and they had but a very inadequate conception of what was about to be done. After the resurrection of Christ. the great ends of His death were more fully opened out, and His character became invested with additional splendour, and His followers began to regard Him with a greater interest than they had ever felt before. What then will heaven be? When the shame. the tears, the blood, and death of the Lord Jesus Christ have resulted in the most complete manifestation of the character of God ever vouchsafed to. His intelligent creatures, and in the eternal salvation of a number which no man can number; when it is seen that all the changes, trials, and afflictions of God's people have actually wrought out for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; -all this will involve such an amount of wisdom, power, and truth, and goodness, that the saints will be for ever "lost in wonder, love, and praise."

